



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



Sustainable  
Development  
Goals



# Culture and Public Policy

FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

FORUM OF MINISTERS  
OF CULTURE | 2019



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Cultural Policies and Development  
Culture Sector, UNESCO

## CULTURE IS A SPACE FOR DIALOGUE IN OUR COMMUNITIES

*In an increasingly fragmented and fragile world, we must be guided by this philosophy, as we re-examine the fundamental role of culture in public policies. We are faced with new challenges whose scope and complexity have emerged over the past twenty years. Today, more than ever, it is vital to ensure the protection and promotion of cultural diversity, in societies where new fault lines are emerging due to the combined effect of growing inequalities, the resurgence of conflicts and the increase in migration flows. In our increasingly urban societies, cultural diversity is an essential component and a crucial source of collective intelligence. Digital technologies are radically transforming people's relationship to work and knowledge, accelerating the spread of new opportunities – democratizing access to culture, creating new professions and forging innovative solutions – whilst also raising new challenges. The urgency of tackling climate change also requires us to rethink our economic models and our societies in order to build a more just and sustainable world.*

*Unlocking the transformative potential of culture for sustainable development is our common ambition and this process is already underway. Culture is firmly anchored in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and Member States themselves are giving it an increasingly important place in their national development programmes, in the fields of education, economic development, development and social inclusion. Over the past twenty years, UNESCO's Cultural Conventions and programmes have adapted their approaches and instruments to enhance their impact on sustainable development, resulting in new tools to support Member States in their cultural policies. A variety of actors and networks have contributed to enriching and reinforcing cultural policies. Cities, as levers of innovation, have become important actors in harnessing culture to revitalize public spaces, support education for sustainable development, nurture intercultural dialogue and facilitate the integration of vulnerable populations. The increasing involvement of civil society in sustainable development also lays the foundation for more inclusive policies.*

*Societies evolve and we must evolve with them. These profound changes directly challenge cultural policies. In more fragmented societies, cultural policies must respond to the aspirations of diverse populations, as well as guarantee pluralism and respect for fundamental rights. Faced with the challenges of sustainable development, culture must play a transversal and decisive role in all areas of public policy. Cultural policies must also be part of multi-stakeholder dialogue, in order to converge these new dynamics, in which States – the guarantors of fundamental rights and main regulators – actively collaborate with international and regional organizations, local authorities, the private sector and civil society.*

*It is in this context that UNESCO is organizing a Forum of Ministers of Culture on 19 November 2019. Twenty-one years after the last Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies in Stockholm, Sweden, the Organization is once again bringing its Member States together to reaffirm the cross-cutting role of culture in public policy and the importance of inter-ministerial dialogue as a platform for exchange, sharing and mobilization. Presented on the occasion of the Forum, this publication – produced in collaboration with regional and sub-regional intergovernmental organizations – provides an overview of the priorities, trends and perspectives of cultural policies in the light of the challenges of sustainable development. It encourages us to place culture at the heart of the political project to forge the societies of tomorrow, that more inclusive and sustainable, echoing the founding mandate of UNESCO.*

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# CULTURAL POLICIES IN LIGHT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

## Sustainable development: a shared commitment

### | New challenges place culture on the frontline of addressing social issues

Over the last two decades, the world has witnessed the emergence of new challenges whose scope, complexity and interdependence have shaped the public policy landscape as a whole. These issues raise fresh questions for cultural policies, creating unprecedented challenges and opportunities in the field of culture, but also requiring a re-examination of the fundamental role of culture in societies, its anchoring in public policies and its potential contribution to building a more just, equitable and sustainable world.

Ensuring the protection and promotion of cultural diversity to build pluralistic and democratic societies is a key challenge. Increasing inequalities within and between countries is now a reality in all regions of the world. The deep disparities in access to basic services, education and health are undermining societies. Large-scale civil protest movements reflect the growing vulnerability of a section of the population, both in terms of their ability to enjoy a decent life and exercise their fundamental rights. The acceleration of migratory flows over the past decade – whether related to armed conflict or economic insecurity – also raises new challenges, both for host countries and those who see their human capital being eroded, especially among younger generations. In both the North and the South, new faultlines and new or resurgent forms of discrimination against certain population categories are appearing. This fragmentation highlights the dual responsibility of countries, which must guarantee a plurality of voices, while preserving their cultural identities and ensuring inclusive societies. In this context, the purpose of cultural policies is now to promote respect for human rights and intercultural dialogue, while encouraging social cohesion, inclusion, resilience, participation and access to culture for all, all of which serve as guarantors of peace.

In some parts of the world, economic and social inequalities have contributed to an upsurge in conflicts or protracted crises, with increasing economic and social repercussions. The unprecedented acceleration of economic migration and prolonged refugee situations are direct consequences of this. The rise in conflicts has had a strong impact on culture, with an increase in the intentional destruction of cultural heritage and violations of cultural and human rights that undermine respect for cultural diversity. Crisis situations also weaken living heritage, which is essential for the resilience of communities.

The urgency of tackling climate change and the deterioration of marine and terrestrial ecosystems is now a reality for us all. The accelerated disappearance of animal and plant species, the weakening of human habitats, and increasing pressure on cultural and natural heritage – linked in particular to the increased frequency of disasters and extreme weather events – are a major challenge for public policies. In some regions – particularly sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, the Caribbean and Latin America – declining agricultural productivity, water scarcity and rising sea levels are increasing climate migration. Beyond the imperative of reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, what is needed is the construction of a human-centred and eco-friendly model of society that recognizes the interaction between humans and their environment, and the intrinsic link between cultural and biological diversity as essential components of a more sustainable form of development. The magnitude of these challenges nevertheless raises awareness of the need to establish new dynamics. The unprecedented mobilization of civil society, especially young people, is a testament to the desire to build global citizenship to face common challenges. Similarly, the growing role of civil society and the private sector in the public debate on sustainable development reflects this emerging dynamic.

The acceleration in the development of digital technologies is a fundamental change that is profoundly transforming societies and their economic models. The knowledge economy and the accelerated spread of digital technologies are revolutionizing our relationship to work, knowledge and human life as a whole. These

changes also impact our relationship with culture, and the ways in which culture is accessed and consumed. They bring new opportunities – including the democratization of culture, the expansion of economic opportunities, the search for solutions based on creativity and innovation – and also new challenges, in particular the weakening of cultural diversity as a result of the concentration of markets and digital technologies.

The increasing pace of urbanization forms the backdrop to these contemporary challenges. The world is now predominantly urban, and this process will only accelerate. By concentrating economic, social and environmental issues, cities reflect and amplify contemporary challenges. Cities are the main contributors to CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. They are also increasingly marked by social and spatial inequalities. However, cities are also drivers of change and sources of innovation to build a more sustainable world. This shift towards a more urban world has had enormous consequences for culture. Increasing economic, political and climate-related migration to cities has their accentuated cultural diversity, which is, more than ever, an essential component of societies. Manifested in the variety of languages, cultural expressions, lifestyles and consumption patterns now found in cities, this diversity offers enormous potential.

Although the nature and scope of these changes are still difficult to anticipate, grasp or measure, they call for a reinvestment in the role of culture as a core component of humanity's social project. This new global landscape therefore directly concerns cultural policies, both in their purpose – which must be firmly aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals – and in terms of the way they are implemented, which must be more cross-cutting and collaborative in order to address complex and multidimensional issues.

### **| The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its cross-cutting approach**

Given the scale of these issues and their interconnectedness, achieving sustainable development must be the priority of public policies today. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development sets out a shared vision for a more just and sustainable world. It provides a framework to support countries in the development and implementation of their public policies at the local, national and international levels. Based on a holistic approach to sustainable development, looking beyond economic growth to focus on human development – the 2030 Agenda marks a paradigm shift from the Millennium Development Goals that preceded it, both in its scope – which now concerns all countries and not only the developing world – and also in its conceptual approach. The 2030 Agenda is based on 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 Targets, structured around five pillars, defined by 5 P's (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnerships). These five pillars reflect both the essential dimensions of sustainable development – economic, social and environmental (People, Planet and Prosperity) – and its two essential conditions (Peace and Partnerships). Sustainable development is thus presented as a set of interrelated variables – from poverty alleviation to education, employment, social justice and environmental protection – highlighting the close links between different public policy areas.

## **Changing public policies**

### **| Towards multilevel governance**

Over the past two decades, the scope and implementation of public policies, including cultural policies, have undergone profound changes. When comparing the trajectories of different countries, certain trends emerge. Although institutional power was formerly centred around the State, it is now influenced by a constellation of stakeholders – regional organizations, local authorities and non-State actors who support States in their advocacy efforts at the national level. This evolution reflects the need to build an informed and participatory response and to renew synergies and solidarity in order to address increasingly complex issues. It is also one of the consequences of the fragmentation of societies, out of which new cultural needs and new actors are emerging.

The rise of local governments – both city and regional – has occurred in most parts of the world, the result of the growing economic and demographic importance of cities and the processes of decentralization underway in some countries. This has led to the reinterpretation or redistribution of competences between national and local authorities, in different ways and to differing degrees. This transformation has profoundly

impacted the field of culture. Although local cultural action has often been a part of a city's mandate in the past, in some countries, competencies that were once considered State prerogatives, such as the inventorying of cultural heritage, have been decentralized. In some regions, particularly in Africa, decentralized cooperation schemes make a significant technical and financial contribution to the cultural sector. As evidenced by the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, an increasing number of cities are also placing creativity at the heart of their territorial strategies, supporting the growth of the creative sector, expanding the range of culture on offer to take into account cultural diversity and vulnerable populations, and involving civil society in the development of local cultural strategies.

At the same time, the role of civil society in the development and implementation of public policy has been strengthened and further structured, reflecting a desire for more participatory governance, even if the inclusion of civil society varies from region to region. By relaying the aspirations of communities to public authorities, civil society increasingly plays an important role in monitoring and participating in issues that directly concern them. Civil society also contributes, in varying degrees, to the identification of needs and policy development. In many countries, it encourages and supports accountability in public governance. Digital technologies, in particular social networks and interactive platforms, facilitate the participation of civil society by encouraging the incubation and sharing of ideas, especially through participatory platforms. The rise of civil society particularly resonates in the field of culture. Culture provides a valuable forum to renew relations between citizens and public authorities, to put forward ideas, to reaffirm the importance of fundamental rights and to encourage community involvement. Civil society movements and trends are often born out of the defence of common heritage or efforts to reclaim neglected spaces for cultural activities. Artists and cultural professionals contribute directly to public awareness of sustainable development.

Reflecting the emergence of these new stakeholders, the financing of public action has also diversified. Although in some regions – namely Europe and the Arab States region – public authorities retain an important role in financing culture, other stakeholders from civil society and the private sector are playing a growing role. In some countries, the rise of public funding in cities and regions is supported by an increase in local taxation. Crowd-funding systems are also becoming more important in the field of culture – whether for heritage restoration or cultural production.

### **Sub-regional and regional dynamics**

Strengthening sub-regional and regional dynamics – driven in particular by sub-regional and regional intergovernmental organizations – is a clear trend. Often united by common cultural or linguistic ties, regions and sub-regions are important spaces for accompanying and structuring national policies, disseminating international regulatory tools and, in some cases, influencing or changing national priorities. The 2030 Agenda has further boosted these sub-regional and regional dynamics, which support efforts to anchor the Sustainable Development Goals in national policies and adapt them to specific regional needs.

Culture is becoming increasingly important in these dynamics, with culture often serving as one of the foundations of regional dialogue. This can be seen, for example, in efforts to promote an African cultural renaissance, which lies at the heart of the African Union Agenda 2063. Sub-regional and regional institutions can be instrumental in fostering the implementation of UNESCO's Culture Conventions, as illustrated by the model law system put in place by the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), a goal of which is to consolidate implementation of the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954), the Convention on the Prevention of the Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property (1970) and the World Heritage Convention (1972). Regional strategies also enable region-specific issues to be highlighted. Thus, the strategies promoted by the Pacific Community (SPC) anchor culture within the logic of resilience, in a region that is particularly vulnerable to the impact of climate change. Regional organizations also help to strengthen the governance of culture, in support of the implementation of the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), concerning cultural goods and the production of local cultural content, which is at the heart of the approach taken by the European Union (EU). Regional cooperation can also catalyze funding for culture and contribute to the regional mobility of artists, as illustrated by CARICOM's work in the Caribbean region.

### **The power of networks**

The spread of new technologies is having a profound impact on the cultural sector, leading to radical transformation of the cultural value chain. The once linear creation-production-distribution-access chain

is now a network, in which different actors interact in real time. Although digital technologies remain unevenly developed around the world, they are nonetheless contributing to the emergence of new forms of networking and information sharing, which contributes to spreading and democratizing their reach. The accelerated digitization of cultural goods and services makes culture more accessible, reduces creation and production time and costs, and supports the emergence of new forms of creativity. However, it also raises new challenges, related in particular to the concentration of markets, the issue of intellectual property rights and the monopoly of major platforms.

In general, the expansion of new technologies has accompanied the rise of public policy networks – particularly regional and international networks of cities, as well as professional and thematic networks – and the modernization of the State. Designed to support public policies and share good practices, these networks are a lever for public policy innovation for sustainable development, sometimes specializing in certain aspects, for example, climate change and social inclusion. They contribute to the emergence of more horizontal governance, based on peer exchange and the sharing of know-how, and also renew the mechanisms of multilateralism.

## Cultural policies: trends, priorities and emerging challenges

### Expansion of the field of cultural policies

Although some countries do not yet have cultural policies, the situation has improved over the last twenty years: many countries have set up institutions dedicated to culture, have built up their technical, human and financial capacities, and have created official cultural policy documents. The implementation of the UNESCO Culture Conventions has been an important development, resulting in the adaptation or strengthening of national legislative frameworks and the creation and implementation of monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. In countries where national cultural policies are largely absent, particularly in the Pacific region, processes are underway, notably encouraged by sub-regional organizations and the strong involvement of the Pacific region in multilateral debates. Nevertheless, culture remains low in the public policy priorities, with spending on culture representing a constant or declining proportion of national expenditures around the world, even dedicating a minimum percentage of public policies to culture – generally 1 to 2% – remains a central objective for some countries.

The sectoral approach of cultural policies has expanded. Alongside traditional efforts to safeguard built cultural heritage, an area that is linked to nation building in many countries, cultural policies are increasingly focused on the creative sector and the safeguarding of intangible heritage. Promoting access to culture and cultural participation remain essential aspects of cultural policies. These efforts often take the form of cultural development interventions – the development of knowledge spaces (museums, cultural centres and libraries), the regeneration of public spaces for cultural expression and events (festivals, fairs, etc.) and the strengthening of cultural and arts education. Generally speaking, cultural policies are now playing a more explicit societal support role. In multicultural societies, they must now fulfil the needs and aspirations of their diverse citizens and contribute to social inclusion.

Encompassing cultural diversity, intangible cultural heritage, cultural goods and services, and cultural diplomacy, the contours of cultural policies have become more vast, fluid and interdisciplinary. Some public policy areas – digital technology, crafts, tourism, the development of public spaces to promote culture – thus fall outside of the sole mandate of ministries of culture and cultural institutions, despite the fact that they directly concern the cultural field. The functions of cultural policies have also profoundly changed. In regions where national cultural policies have existed for a while, cultural infrastructure projects tend to have less prominence in national policies; there is instead an increasing participation of local authorities, the private sector and civil society in the financing and management of cultural facilities. Regulation remains a central task, with the State remaining solely responsible for legislating and developing standards, while facing the new challenges of the digital age. Education, transmission and leading the public debate have taken on new importance, with the aim of strengthening non-formal, technical and vocational education and training and lifelong learning, in a way that is better adapted to the diversity of the population and the challenge of inclusion.

Although historically cultural policies have remained relatively isolated from other areas of public policy – a fairly common trend in all parts of the world – their scope has expanded in recent years, with the aim of

enhancing the economic and social potential of culture, and investing in policies linked to economic growth, education, social inclusion, land-use planning and health.

The complexity and interconnectedness of the challenges of sustainable development have caused the borders between different areas of public policies to become more porous, leading to the reinforcement of cross-cutting rationales (interministerial and intersectoral collaboration, etc.) and the emergence of new sectors of public action – notably concerning digital technology and gender equality. The rise of civil society and local authorities accentuates this trend towards transversality by boosting collaborative and integrated approaches. The implementation of the 2030 Agenda tends to strengthen these cross-cutting approaches and root them in public policies. As such, national processes linked to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda foster cooperation between ministries in each country, sometimes resulting in the introduction of sustainable intersectoral collaboration systems.

Although this cross-cutting approach to culture is not new – it featured prominently in the World Conference on Cultural Policies, *Mondiacult*, (Mexico City, Mexico, 1982) – cultural policies rarely integrate the notion of sustainable development. Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the contribution of culture to sustainable development has been more explicitly expressed in national and local cultural policies, with priority placed in particular on culture’s contribution to economic development, social inclusion and education. At the same time, culture has become more prominent in other areas of public policy, notably urban development. Culture has been progressively integrated into national development plans as well as the Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) prepared by Member States within the framework of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Some areas remain broadly absent from cultural policies, despite their potential to root culture within sustainable development. For example, although culture is often at the centre of conflicts – either as a source, target or as the victim of collateral damage – national cultural policies rarely focus on peace-building, conflict management and resolution, or on the contribution of culture to resilience and socio-economic development in prolonged crisis situations (despite this issue being the subject of numerous programmes, notably those supported by UNESCO). Likewise, the ecological transition and the fight against climate change are rarely formulated as specific objectives of cultural policies, even though cultural heritage is greatly affected by the impact of climate change and the potential of the creative sector to support the public debate on the ecological transition is widely recognized.



## CULTURE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: STRATEGIC INITIATIVES OF UNESCO

### Supporting reflections: major intergovernmental conferences

#### | A key component of the Organization’s mandate

Since its inception, UNESCO has provided a strategic platform for inter-ministerial dialogue across the areas of its mandate. Major inter-ministerial conferences are part of the Organization’s strategic function and serve its founding mission: i) acting as a laboratory of ideas, ii) shaping the global agenda through policy analysis and monitoring, iii) defining norms and standards, iv) strengthening international cooperation (institutional, operational and intellectual), and v) providing guidance for policy development and implementation. Over time, these major conferences have helped support reflection and public debate in the fields of culture, education, the sciences and communication, and have led to the emergence of concepts and tools for supporting Member States in the development and implementation of policies.

UNESCO's first programmes in the field of culture reflected the political and social situation of the post-war paradigm. As the Organization's mandate is to contribute to building peace through education, science and culture, priority was given to promoting international cooperation in the arts and recognizing the diversity of cultural identities. This led to the adoption of the Universal Copyright Convention (1952) and the Declaration of the Principles of International Cultural Co-operation (1966). The latter states that 'each culture has a dignity and value which must be respected and preserved' and that 'all cultures form part of the common heritage belonging to all mankind'. On the initiative of UNESCO, an intergovernmental conference on the institutional, administrative and financial aspects of culture was held in Venice (Italy) in 1970, resulting in the emergence of the notions of cultural development and the cultural dimension of development.

Reflecting the beginnings of international thinking on sustainable development in the 1970s, UNESCO subsequently organized a number of major meetings – including the World Conference on Cultural Policies – MONDIACULT (Mexico City, Mexico, 1982) and the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development (Stockholm, Sweden, 1998). These meetings mobilized a large number of Member States, and, in the years that followed, led to significant advances that enabled UNESCO to position itself at a global level in terms of its cultural mandate. These advances include the emergence of the concept of cultural diversity (sparked by the World Decade for Cultural Development 1988-1997 and the UNESCO Report entitled *Our Creative Diversity*, born from the World Commission on Culture and Development in 1995), the widening of the concept of culture to include intangible cultural heritage (largely as a result of the discussion generated by the 1989 UNESCO Recommendation for the Safeguarding of Traditional Culture and Folklore and the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity) and establishing a new global cultural policy agenda in support of development (Stockholm, 1998).

This thinking was given formal expression and widely shared at a number of international and intergovernmental conferences and via World Culture Reports (1998 and 2000) produced by UNESCO. This supported the development of a body of concepts, definitions and instruments that have continued to enrich the field of cultural policies and laid the foundations for demonstrating the place of culture in development.

### **A conceptual foundation that has enabled the emergence of a developed normative framework**

These ministerial meetings and the global reports that emanated from them supported Member States in defining their priorities and drafting international standard-setting texts – UNESCO's Culture Conventions, recommendations and declarations – and national legislation. The normative instruments adopted over the last twenty years – including the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001), the Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001), the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), the Declaration concerning the Intentional Destruction of Cultural Heritage (2003) and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) – began this way, as did their concepts and founding principles. These reflections and the political will they engendered also encouraged three earlier Conventions – the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) and its two Protocol (1954 and 1999), the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970) and the World Heritage Convention (1972) – to gradually adapt their concepts and approaches to contemporary challenges. Notable developments included the expansion of heritage categories to include intangible cultural heritage, natural landscapes, historic urban landscapes and industrial heritage, as well as the adaptation of heritage conservation practices to development challenges.

## **Rooting sustainable development in normative action: the Organization's Culture Conventions and Recommendations**

### **Sustainable development at the heart of the conventions**

The UNESCO Culture Conventions were drafted and adopted at the request of Member States, which called for the establishment of international standards that could serve as a basis for international

cooperation and the formulation of national cultural policies. The standard-setting instruments developed over a 55-year period reflect the priorities of the international community in the field of culture at the time of their adoption. They also illustrate the evolution of cultural policies and the role played by various governmental and non-governmental stakeholders. These normative instruments complement each other in that they address different subjects and can serve as a reference point for national cultural policies. More recently adopted instruments provide a better understanding of previous instruments, as they reveal the impact of past policies and respond to the new needs of changing societies. Taken as a whole, they form a series of tools for supporting Member States, through their cultural policies, to safeguard, protect and promote the world's cultural diversity in the context of globalization and an ever-changing world.

In barely twenty years, UNESCO has greatly expanded its standard-setting action in the field of culture through the adoption of three new conventions in 2001, 2003 and 2005, and by bolstering the ratification and implementation of its three earlier conventions, all of which have considerably strengthened the Organization's normative base in the field of culture. At the national level, the expansion of the UNESCO Culture Conventions has helped to strengthen and update the culture sector's legislative framework, incorporating a more holistic vision of culture. The Organization's strategic focus on normative action – accentuated over the last five years by financial crisis and a refocusing of objectives – has helped build a political consensus with Member States on the challenges and aims of cultural action, to refine conceptual and operational tools, and to boost and structure cooperation with other types of stakeholders, such as technical and professional organizations, UNESCO Chairs, research centres and institutes (whose emergence has increased over the past two years) and private sector partners, to implement the conventions.

The principles of cultural diversity and development are at the heart of UNESCO's Culture Conventions, which work to protect and safeguard cultural property, tangible heritage and intangible cultural heritage, as well as promote cultural expressions, with the goal of preserving cultural diversity and ensuring its transmission to future generations. However, each convention offers its own unique insights based on its specific area of intervention. In recent years, UNESCO's Culture Conventions and programmes have fine-tuned and enriched their approaches to better demonstrate their impact and direct contribution to sustainable development. Most conventions have now integrated the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into their implementation and monitoring mechanisms in various ways.

### **Boosting the impact of normative instruments: a continuing process**

The Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two Protocols (1954 and 1999) focus on the cultural, humanitarian and security aspects of development. These are now widely recognized and referenced in several United Nations General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. The Convention contributes directly to Target 11.4 for cultural heritage by imposing criminal penalties for attacks on cultural heritage. The Convention also helps to improve sustainable development skills (Target 4.7), supporting the capacity of representatives of the armed forces, customs and police forces, and personnel involved in protecting cultural heritage.

The Convention on the Prevention of the Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property (1970) is an important tool for supporting security and peace-building (SDG 16). The safeguarding of cultural heritage (Target 11.4) and the restitution of stolen property (Target 16.4) are directly linked to the Convention's mandate. It also contributes to education for sustainable development (Target 4.7), introducing awareness campaigns aimed at the public and tourists. Finally, it contributes to the prevention of violence (Target 16.a) through the organization of workshops for exchange and capacity-building.

Since its adoption, the World Heritage Convention (1972) has been a platform for developing and testing new approaches, revealing the importance of cultural and natural heritage for sustainable development. The scope of the Convention is key to Target 11.4 on safeguarding cultural and natural heritage. Adopted by the World Heritage Committee in 2015, the 'World Heritage and Sustainable Development Policy' is an important milestone for the inclusion of sustainable development concepts in the Convention's mechanisms. It offers guidance to States Parties for taking full advantage of the potential of cultural heritage for sustainable development and making it part of their local and national processes. The implementation of the Convention contributes to environmental sustainability, protecting natural resources such as water and biodiversity (Targets 6.6, 14.5 and 15.1) and supporting the resilience of cultural heritage (Targets 2.4 and 11.4). It promotes inclusive social development by contributing to well-being

and equity (Target 10.2), respect for fundamental rights (Target 16.10), community participation (Target 16.7) and gender equality (Target 5.5). The Convention also supports inclusive economic development by stimulating equitable growth and the creation of decent jobs (Target 8.3) and sustainable tourism (Targets 8.9 and 12.b). It also supports the development of skills and innovation (Targets 4.4 and 4.7), and contributes to peace and security by facilitating conflict prevention and resolution (Target 16.a). The question of sustainable development was recently introduced into the questionnaire for the periodic report on the implementation of the Convention, in order to gather information on the contribution of the activities introduced by States Parties to the implementation of SDGs. The role of the Convention with regard to towns and cities (SDG 11) is also supported by the Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (2011), which offers a global approach to the conservation of urban heritage, linking spatial, economic, social and environmental aspects.

The Recommendation concerning the Protection and Promotion of Museums and Collections (2015) offers a framework for ensuring that museums remain places of cultural transmission, intercultural dialogue, learning, debate and training. In this way, they support social inclusion (Target 10.2) and help to nurture the skills required for sustainable development (Target 4.7).

The Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage (2001) covers the social and environmental aspects essential to sustainable development. It supports education for sustainable development (Target 4.7) through educational activities on the ocean and its heritage, and contributes to the sustainability of coastal cities and the safeguarding of their cultural identity. Underwater cultural heritage is a testament to how people have adapted to or have been affected by climate change in the past, contributing to climate change education (Target 13.3). Underwater cultural heritage also reveals the historical relationship between humanity and oceans, lakes and rivers. Research and safeguarding activities help to improve the conservation of coastlines and marine areas for future generations. They also enhance the economic and social benefits of sustainable tourism, promoting the conservation and sustainable use of aquatic resources (Targets 14.5 and 14.7).

The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) recognizes the importance of intangible cultural heritage as a vehicle for cultural diversity and as an enabler of sustainable development. Adopted in 2016, Chapter 6 of the Operational Directives for the implementation of the Convention advises States Parties on how to strengthen the role of intangible cultural heritage as a lever and guarantor of sustainable development, as well as on how to integrate the safeguarding of living heritage into their development plans, policies and programmes. The 2030 Agenda has also been inserted in the Convention's monitoring mechanisms, through periodic reporting and the Overall Results Framework. The living heritage knowledge and practices passed down from generation to generation cover such broad areas as agriculture and food systems, traditional medicine, natural resource management, ecosystem services and the management of ecological resources. They contribute to food security (SDG 2), health systems (SDG 3), quality education (SDG 4), gender equality (SDG 5), productive employment and decent work (SDG 8), sustainable cities (SDG 11) and the fight against climate change (SDG 13). SDG 4 (quality education) and the role of the intangible cultural heritage in education for sustainable development (Target 4.7) is also a priority, echoing the text of the Convention (Article 2).

The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), the most recent normative tool of the Organization, aims to promote diversity and encourage the creativity of individuals and populations, thus contributing to economic development and the conservation and enhancement of world cultural diversity. The Convention grew out of a desire to humanize globalization and to defend the specificity of cultural goods in the market economy. The link between cultural diversity and sustainable development is one of its founding principles.

The 2005 Convention aligned its implementation mechanisms with the principles and objectives of the 2030 Agenda. Particular emphasis is placed on SDGs 4, 5, 8, 10, 16 and 17, which have been incorporated into its monitoring framework through its four main goals. Within the scope of its first goal on the sustainable governance of culture, the Convention seeks to support jobs and entrepreneurship in the cultural sector (Target 8.3), to strengthen the skills needed for employment in the creative fields (8.3 and 4.4) and to promote accountable and participatory governance of the creative and cultural

industries (Targets 16.6 and 16.7). Through its second goal concerning trade and mobility, the Convention supports a more balanced flow of cultural goods and services (Target 10.a) and the mobility of artists and cultural professionals (Target 10.7). With its third goal of integrating culture into sustainable development frameworks, the Convention encourages official development assistance for the cultural sector (Target 17.2), enhances policy coherence for sustainable development (Target 17.14) and takes part in capacity-building for implementing the SDGs (Target 17.9). By encouraging gender equality and artistic freedom through its fourth goal, the Convention also contributes to human rights and fundamental freedom (Target 16.10). This monitoring framework is implemented on the basis of a quadrennial periodic reporting system, which was updated to facilitate the collection of quantitative and qualitative data related to the achievement of the SDGs. Parties are invited to share innovative policies and measures, which are disseminated on the Convention's Policy Monitoring Platform. The International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD), established as part of the Convention, is also currently reviewing its results framework to align it with specific SDGs and targets, in line with the Convention's monitoring framework. The 1980 Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist – the implementation of which was reinvigorated by the 2005 Convention – also contributes to social inclusion (Target 10.2) and fundamental freedoms (Target 16.10), by calling on Member States to improve the professional, economic and social status of artists, through policies and measures related to training, social security, employment, income and taxation, mobility and freedom of expression.

### **Strengthening the links between national policies and local communities**

In keeping with the evolution of cultural policies, cultural conventions have progressively incorporated other types of stakeholders, in addition to national authorities, which remain responsible for the implementation of normative instruments with regard to the international community. The evolution of normative tools – both in their founding principles and in their implementation procedures – thus reflects the gradual emergence of a more inclusive governance of culture, bringing together a number of different stakeholders, including beneficiary communities, cultural experts and professionals, technical and professional organizations, UNESCO research centres and institutes, private sector partners, and so on.

The 2003 Convention thus placed communities at the heart of its implementation. According to the terms of the Convention, State Parties must involve communities, which are responsible for the creation, maintenance and transmission of cultural heritage, in the identification and definition of intangible cultural heritage and in the preparation and implementation of safeguarding plans or the dissemination of good practices. To this end, States Parties are encouraged to establish advisory bodies or coordination mechanisms to facilitate the effective and sustainable participation of communities. Inscription on the Convention's lists also requires the free, prior and informed consent of the communities concerned. The Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund is helping to operationalize this principle, targeting in particular the preparation of inventories and safeguarding measures by communities.

For its part, the 2005 Convention places civil society at the heart of cultural policies, alongside public, national and local authorities. In keeping with the Convention's primary goal of supporting sustainable governance systems, Parties are invited to take the necessary measures to ensure governance that promotes the active participation of civil society in the development and implementation of cultural policies; such participation is essential to better reflect citizens' needs and aspirations. This recognition of civil society is a fundamental step forward, echoing the aims of the 2030 Agenda (particularly SDGs 16 and 17). The IFCD promotes this goal by supporting the participation of civil society in the development and implementation of cultural strategies and policies.

Local governments are also becoming more important to the implementation of the conventions, although this ultimately remains the State's responsibility. Under the 1972 Convention, local governments have become indispensable partners, particularly in the implementation of management plans for World Heritage sites. Local authorities have also taken ownership of the objectives of the 2005 Convention, incorporating them into local and regional strategies. The creation of the UNESCO Cities Platform in 2019, which incorporates several UNESCO programmes and networks of cities, such as Creative Cities and World Heritage Cities – reflects the growing importance of local authorities in the implementation of the Organization's mandate and in particular its Culture Conventions and Recommendations.



# VISION AND PERSPECTIVE

## Culture in sustainable development: an approach that is gaining ground

### | Culture: an engine of social transformation

The magnitude, complexity and urgent nature of the challenges of sustainable development – in particular the challenges of social inclusion, the climate crisis, the technological revolution and the rise in conflicts and migratory flows – are pushing the Organization and its Member States to reassert the leading and transformative role of culture in public policies, thus promoting a mandate that UNESCO alone is able to uphold within the United Nations system. In a context where both societies and the international community appear particularly fragmented, the risk of a backslide in terms of fundamental rights calls for a reiteration of the commitment to the importance of cultural diversity, as a fundamental human right but also as an essential component of humanity and a more just and sustainable world.

Under the combined effect of globalization, urbanization and migration, cultural and religious diversity is an intrinsic component of our societies, in all parts of the world. Against this backdrop, cultural policies must fulfil the aspirations of an increasingly diverse population and allow everyone to freely express their culture while enjoying a diversity of cultural expressions in order to ensure pluralistic and peaceful societies. Cultural pluralism thus calls for the expansion of the choice of cultural activities and the democratization of the cultural sector beyond the traditional institutional approach, so that culture, in all its dimensions and expressions, strengthens exchanges within societies, particularly through the promotion of intergenerational dialogue, through initiatives targeting social cohesion and by involving a greater variety of stakeholders. At the same time, the growing fragmentation of societies firmly orient cultural policies towards ensuring the ‘harmonious interaction among people and groups with plural, varied and dynamic cultural identities as well as their willingness to live together’, thus reviving the principles of the *Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity* (2001).

Generally speaking, cultural policies act as a sounding board for the fundamental questions facing societies. They are therefore required to reconcile or combine different public policy objectives, including: i) contributing to social cohesion and nation building, while ensuring respect and recognition of cultural diversity; ii) contributing to shaping citizenship at the national level, while ensuring an openness to global citizenship; iii) supporting the economic development of culture, while retaining the status of culture as a common good; and (iv) supporting the institutionalization of culture, its inclusion in the different fields of public policies, the development of infrastructure and support mechanisms, and the continuity of public financing, while ensuring the broad participation of civil society and the private sector.

These questions concern the entire scope of public policies. They are often the dimensions around which different actors – public authorities, civil society, the private sector – determine their respective roles. They lead to varied responses according to regional specificities, institutional and political systems and the socio-economic context of each country.

The institutional, legal and conceptual achievements of normative action over the last twenty years provides a solid basis for reaffirming the role of culture as a driving force for innovation, social transformation and development. UNESCO’s various standard-setting instruments all place the fundamental principle of cultural diversity at their heart, which they have subsequently rooted in the regulatory frameworks and national policies of Member States themselves.

Furthermore, the culture and development advocacy undertaken by the Organization, which was supported by Member States in the years leading up to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, has significantly enhanced the presence of culture in international discussions on sustainable development. The adoption of seven resolutions on culture and sustainable development<sup>1</sup> by the United Nations General Assembly and the

<sup>1</sup> Resolution references: A/RES/65/166 (20/12/2010), A/RES/66/208 (22/12/2011), A/RES/68/223 (20/12/2013), A/RES/69/230 (19/12/2014), A/RES/70/214 (22/12/2015), A/RES/72/229 (20/12/2017)

organization of several international meetings<sup>2</sup> have facilitated the transversal integration of culture into the 2030 Agenda, which makes implicit reference to culture in several of its Goals and Targets, although culture does not constitute a dedicated Sustainable Development Goal itself. The international, national and local mechanisms in place for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda act as driving force for this advocacy work, particularly through the more systematic and pro-active consideration of culture in the monitoring of SDG achievement and in the of the Voluntary National Reviews presented by Member States of the United Nations.

### **Cultural cooperation and diplomacy: a burgeoning strategic priority**

Culture remains an important axis of international cooperation and the concepts of influence, cultural diplomacy and dialogue between peoples constitute priority areas not only for cultural policies, but also for foreign policies in many countries. Within the field of bilateral and multilateral cooperation, the financial weight of culture remains modest in terms of the overall volume of development assistance, although the safeguarding of heritage and, increasingly, support for the creative sector, are often strategic areas of intervention for donor countries as part of their cultural diplomacy objectives. Cultural diplomacy can thus impact a broad spectrum of fields such as tourism, cultural products, specific traditions (such as gastronomy), research and innovation, infrastructure (such as museums) and territorial planning.

Cultural diplomacy has also established itself over the last decade as a strategic element of 'soft power', which is becoming increasingly prominent in competition between States. Often falling outside the mandate of ministries of culture and promoted at the highest level of the State system or integrated into foreign policy, cultural diplomacy is becoming a negotiation tool in its own right, incorporated into national policy as a strategic lever for economic, social, environmental and technological advances. This evolution reflects the reconstruction of the international order in the now multipolar international community. As such, although in the decades following decolonization, culture often served as a central element of nation building for young States, it is now a lever through which alliances are made, renegotiated and restructured.

## **Incorporating a diversity of stakeholders: how to support States?**

### **Supporting the development and revision of cultural policies and ministerial dialogue**

In light of the complexity of the challenges of sustainable development, and their systemic and multidimensional nature, cultural policies must now more than ever be part of composite governance, involving the State, local authorities, civil society and the private sector, with the State remaining the guarantor of fundamental rights and freedoms and the main regulatory body. This participatory approach is vital in today's resolutely multicultural societies, which are seeing the emergence of a plurality of voices and stakeholders and generating new needs, outside of the institutional scope of culture. This participatory approach is also in line with the increasing constraints on national public financing, particularly within the field of culture.

The role of the State in cultural policies, however, remains essential to ensure the regulation, support and planning of the sector, in order to give the actions undertaken greater breadth, visibility and critical mass. The State remains responsible for the preparation and implementation of cultural policies tailored to the needs of all citizens and that respect fundamental rights. It must guarantee respect for cultural diversity as a common good and a catalyst for sustainable development, notably with regard to trends towards homogenization and concentration sparked by the market economy and the digital age. Lastly, it must represent the voice of culture in all public policies, through a staunchly interministerial approach.

In this respect, it is vital to reassert a global approach to cultural policies, which should not be conceived as an isolated sector but as an essential dimension of public action in its various components, in order to fully include culture in sustainable development. Likewise, cultural policies should not be confined to a specific field of culture and must cover culture in its entirety, including tangible and intangible cultural heritage, artistic creation and the creative economy, museums and cultural spaces. Finally, cultural policies must be aimed at the entire population in all its diversity, which should be able to benefit from and have access to these policies, and participate in an active and reflective way.

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<sup>2</sup> International Congress 'Culture: Key to Sustainable Development' (Hangzhou, China, 15-17 May 2013)

In this context, the Forum of Ministers of Culture – the result of an intergovernmental approach promoted by UNESCO, the principle multilateral forum whose mandate covers culture – is more vital than ever. In the face of the fragmentation of our contemporary world and the relative backslide of some past gains in terms of fundamental rights, multilateralism is more essential than ever in aligning these multiple interventions in the service of the common good and general interest. The challenges of sustainable development today call for a revival of interministerial dialogue on culture. A new form of exchange, solidarity and sharing needs to emerge in the face of these unprecedented challenges.

### **Scaling up and reviving public action: the role of platforms and new stakeholders**

To establish governance that is more inclusive of cultural policies and reflects contemporary challenges, platforms facilitating collaboration between the State and new stakeholders in cultural policies – local authorities, civil society and the private sector – have emerged in all countries. The challenge is to better define the respective roles, to entrench and ensure the continuation of collaborative practices and to facilitate the exchange of good practices to better understand the cultural needs of societies and to deal with global challenges. In this regard, the national collaboration mechanisms put in place within the framework of the implementation of the conventions – in particular the 2005 Convention and the 1972 Convention – provide a solid foundation and vital intermediaries to scale-up the public action carried out by the State.

The collaboration between the State and local authorities – already widely implemented within the framework of the conventions – must be extended. The role of local authorities is crucial in expanding and adapting the range of cultural activities to increasingly diverse populations, as well as in supporting the non-State frameworks of civil society and industry associations, where cultural aspirations are increasingly expressed. The UNESCO Cities Platform helps enhance the innovation potential of cities and various professional networks of expertise, to forge solutions to the challenges of sustainable development.

Civil society is also a key partner when it comes to the cultural policies adopted by States. Civil society's agility and capacity for innovation are key drivers for cultural policies and the vitality of societies, by ensuring better consideration of uses and needs, particularly among the most vulnerable populations. In some fields – notably culture's contribution to peace-building and to climate change – civil society programmes have been ahead of the curve in relation to public policy, which could take greater inspiration from civil society action more generally.

Likewise, many States are relying more heavily on the private sector to better capitalize on the innovation potential and agility of the private sector, particularly when it comes to new technologies. Some tasks previously assigned to States – cultural development in particular – would benefit from being shared more widely with private stakeholders. The State's regulatory role with regard to the sector remains essential, however, particularly in the creative economy where the trend towards the concentration of digital platforms is undermining cultural diversity.

### **Stimulating sub-regional and regional dialogue**

The regional studies conducted in preparation for the Forum of Ministers of Culture in partnership with sub-regional and regional intergovernmental organizations have underlined the importance of sub-regional and regional dynamics when it comes to supporting national cultural policies and aligning them more generally with the challenges of sustainable development, but also in strengthening regional exchanges and markets in the field of culture. By drawing on the approaches to culture and development specific to each region, this initiative facilitates the national anchoring of the Organization's Conventions and programmes and helps build more structured and reinforced cooperation between international organizations and sub-regional and regional organizations, in order to pool efforts and synergies to tackle common problems.

The discussions underway at the sub-regional and regional level also make it possible to document the trends specific to each region in terms of their approach to culture or cultural policy priorities and to gain a more solid overview of the status of cultural policies and their contribution to sustainable development. In this regard, UNESCO's recent implementation of the Culture.2030 Knowledge Platform and regional dialogue mechanisms, involving inter-regional organizations as well as UNESCO Field Offices, should strengthen the consistency and the impact of the Organization's intervention.

## Documenting and assessing the impact of standard-setting action and the contribution of culture to sustainable development

### Measuring the impact of culture on sustainable development in national development policies: the data challenge

In all parts of the world, the collection and analysis of data in the cultural field constitutes a central issue and an obstacle to the implementation of cultural policies, as well as their inclusion in the broader context of sustainable development – although this is true to differing degrees depending on the country in question. The cross-cutting nature of culture is the first difficulty: although culture touches upon different sectors at the national level, the collection and analysis criteria are often confined to the field of culture in itself. The multifaceted dimension of culture, the co-existence of formal and informal activities and the variety of definitions and concepts represent additional difficulties. The existing methodological tools therefore often prove insufficient to understanding culture in its specificity and in the scope of its contribution, both direct and indirect, to other fields of public policy and to the objectives of sustainable development. Furthermore, data concerning culture are often insufficient, difficult to access or fragmented, as they are produced by different institutions and agencies.

Improving access to quantitative and qualitative data and the introduction of indicators are therefore an important objective of cultural policies, regularly highlighted by the Member States themselves as a requirement in order to develop, strengthen and revise their cultural policies. The challenge, more globally, is to lead advocacy efforts in favour of culture, to direct public financing towards the cultural sector and to better inform public policies. In some countries, this is achieved through the strengthening of the standard-setting or managerial approaches to public action, which result in monitoring and/or evaluation measures and the production of indicators. In other countries, the need for data meets the need to influence budgetary decisions in favour of culture, particularly for development assistance.

In this regard, discussions on data and indicators must take place within a resolutely pragmatic framework, that takes into account a context of considerable disparities between national statistics capacities. The international comparability of cultural indicators is an important dimension, in order to measure the impact of culture in all public policies at the national level, and to contribute to the international advocacy of culture and document global and regional trends. Nonetheless, international comparability is not an exclusive criterion, given that the challenge is also to support national policies and to allow them to measure their advances, both with regard to the effectiveness and impact of cultural policies themselves, and from the point of view of their contribution to sustainable development. In this context, the UNESCO Thematic Indicators for Culture in the 2030 Agenda initiative, currently under development, provides a conceptual and analytical framework to support the Member States when it comes to measuring the contribution of culture to the Sustainable Development Goals.

### Strengthening the implementation of the UNESCO Culture Conventions to better inform cultural policies

To support the cultural policies of Member States and boost cultural advocacy more broadly, it remains vital to document and measure the impact of UNESCO's standard-setting action and programmes in the field of culture. In a context where most conventions and programmes have developed, to differing degrees, conceptual tools and mechanisms to analyze, promote and measure their contribution to the 2030 Agenda, the challenge today is extending these initiatives towards a joint effort to systematically document information, data and good practices generated by the implementation of each of the Culture Conventions with a view to strengthening the global impact of the latter in favour of sustainable development at the national level.

Documentation and measurement tools must, first of all, ensure the monitoring of the implementation of conventions and cultural programmes themselves. Therefore, the periodic reporting mechanisms and results frameworks put in place by some conventions make it possible to assess, qualitatively or quantitatively, the conditions for implementing the conventions and supporting Member States. They provide a conceptual basis and performance indicators. More broadly, documenting good practices – notably with the work already undertaken by the 2005 Convention – should be strengthened for the other conventions so as to systematize the collection and documentation on the scale of the good practices developed by Member States.

Tools should also make it possible to document and measure the impact of standard-setting action on the legislative framework of Member States. Despite being essential to assessing the effective impact of the conventions on public policies, this aspect remains underdeveloped. The impact of the cultural conventions on the legislative framework is largely seen indirectly, and is not documented as such. The revival and expansion of the database of national cultural heritage legislation, originally created for the 1970 Convention, could provide valuable insights. The periodic report mechanisms of the Conventions could also be used more widely and systematically to extract information, develop analysis and document legislative impact, in order to feed such a database.

### **Reinvesting in dialogue on culture**

In light of the scope and complexity of sustainable development challenges, UNESCO must once again lead the discussion on the role of culture in the contemporary world. An exercise in reflection that is both historical and forward-looking is called for, at a time when the speed of technological transformations and the rise of new challenges are raising profound questions. Although the concepts forged in the 1980s and 1990s provide a conceptual basis that has made it possible to develop UNESCO's standard-setting action, particularly in the 2000s, they must be revisited in light of contemporary issues.

UNESCO has a vital responsibility to contribute to international discussions on major contemporary challenges within its mandate that affect national public policies. Issues such as the dialogue around the exchange and return of cultural property, the criminalization of cultural crimes, the status and freedom of artists, the impact of digital technology on culture and new culture-related professions, the links between culture, creativity and innovation, the relationship between culture and education, and the ethics of artificial intelligence related to culture are likely to emerge in the coming decades. These questions – among others – directly concern UNESCO's mandate and its standard-setting tools. The Organization must therefore position itself with regard to these challenges, and, to do so, pro-actively invest in the field of knowledge in order to guide its future action.

Likewise, the discussion on the central themes of cultural policies that cut across the conventions – in particular cultural and arts education and improving access to culture and cultural participation – must be taken up again, in response to the need for support expressed by the Member States. The initiatives undertaken within some conventions in their respective fields – for example the 2003 and 2005 Conventions on education – could contribute to this cross-cutting debate. The thematic programmes on crafts and cultural and arts education would also benefit from analysis.

In the current context, numerous questions concern cultural policies and UNESCO. How should we measure the impact of UNESCO's cultural designations on sustainable development (World Heritage sites, elements on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, UNESCO Creative Cities, sites in need of enhanced protection)? How can we develop cultural policies that build on cultural heritage as a tool for dialogue and social cohesion at the national and local level? How can we encourage the implementation of sustainable tourism strategies that benefit the communities concerned and that promote inclusive and sustainable development? How can we strengthen learning on culture and coexistence in early childhood educational programmes? How can we better structure and strengthen vocational training programmes for cultural trades, in both the formal and non-formal creative economy, in ways that support the transmission of knowledge? How can we support research for development and innovation in the cultural field? How can the private sector contribute to the safeguarding of cultural diversity (whether in terms of heritage and its expressions or through actions that encourage social inclusion)? How can we systematize and strengthen mechanisms to encourage the participation of all stakeholders in civil society in cultural life? How can we encourage synergies between cultural policies and other areas of public policies? These are some of the questions that would benefit from further examination, in order to strengthen the scope of UNESCO's action, not only in setting standards, but more broadly in the field of culture on a global scale.

# REGIONAL SNAPSHOTS: Trends, Challenges and Opportunities

## METHODOLOGY

The following chapters offer snapshots of culture in public policy in eight regions and sub-regions around the world. Their purpose is to identify overall trends, challenges and opportunities for the countries of each study area, with a view to looking towards new strategic orientations. Emphasis is also placed on the nexus between cultural policies and their cross-cutting contribution to sustainable development.

The country groupings of the study areas reflect the membership of the regional intergovernmental organizations that carried out the studies, which were commissioned by UNESCO in 2019. These studies were complemented by UNESCO and UN published sources and studies to ensure a global approach in line with UNESCO's broad membership.

Each chapter presents the key geographic, historic and socio-economic features of the region or sub-region, to demonstrate how this context has guided the evolution of cultural policies. They also present a broad outline of governance frameworks of the countries concerned, as well as the dynamics between countries of the region from a cultural perspective. These chapters highlight the specific features and strengths of cultural policies in the regions covered, revealing how a diversity of approaches can inform the international debate. Crucially, each chapter explores the linkages between culture and broader public policy issues in order to identify where the region or sub-region would benefit from reinforcing such linkages, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals.

These snapshots draw extensively on the studies conducted by the sub-regional and regional intergovernmental organizations, which provided informative reflections and insights from the countries within their purview on various aspects of cultural policies and sustainable development. The following chapters also benefitted from analysis and data from academic and institutional documentary sources, as well as Voluntary National Reviews submitted by Member States to the UN, which monitor progress towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda.

It is hoped that these snapshots will stimulate long-term dialogue and policy reflection, within regions and sub-regions, as well as at the international level.

# HIGHLIGHTS

- While the study area has a long tradition in the conservation of its rich cultural heritage, including through well-established museums and other cultural institutions, cultural policies have gradually expanded to encompass cultural and creative industries.
  - Whilst there are generally strong cultural policies at the national level, there is increasing recognition of the importance of fostering sub-regional and regional cultural identities, in the face of challenges to the multilateral system.
    - Digital technologies increasingly feature in cultural policies, including to protect artists' rights, expand access to culture or broaden information sources to encourage sustainable cultural tourism.
    - In a context of increasingly diverse societies, enhancing social inclusion through cultural policies, fostering respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms is a priority, and there have been recent innovative methods to reinforce data collection to address this issue.
  - Whilst overall, countries within the study area have aligned public policies to the 2030 Agenda, notably through a growing number of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), there is further scope to integrate culture into cross-cutting public policies, particularly in urban regeneration.



Albania • Andorra • Austria • Belgium • Bosnia and Herzegovina • Bulgaria • Canada • Croatia • Cyprus • Czechia • Denmark • Estonia • Faroes • Finland • France • Germany • Greece • Hungary • Iceland • Ireland • Italy • Latvia • Lithuania • Luxembourg • Malta • Monaco • Montenegro • Netherlands • North Macedonia • Norway • Poland • Portugal • Romania • San Marino • Serbia • Slovakia • Slovenia • Spain • Sweden • Switzerland • Turkey • United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland





## CULTURE HISTORICALLY ANCHORED WITHIN PUBLIC POLICIES

The study area is an extended region, covering forty-two countries. Europe has been shaped by a legacy of ancient civilizations and subsequent populations through to the modern era, leaving a wealth of urban cultural heritage – including 171 cultural World Heritage sites. Around three quarters of the region’s population is urban today. In North America, many indigenous communities lived in the region prior to the spread of European settlements during the 18th century, which largely erased pre-existing indigenous settlements, although the region’s indigenous community is still a rich source of intangible cultural heritage. Across both Europe and North America, urbanization was spurred notably by the 19th century industrial revolution and intensified following the Second World War through the reconstruction process and rural-urban migration. The region today is highly urbanized, with a mix of small-, middle-, and large-sized cities. The migration and mixing of populations has long been a social phenomenon in Europe while North America has been profoundly shaped by progressive waves of migration, all of which contribute to the cultural characteristics of the region. Although Europe and North America generally rank rather high in terms of human development, the region has faced growing social and economic inequalities over the last decades, as well as significant levels of unemployment combined with the overall ageing of the population.

Europe was one of the first regions to adopt cultural policies – arts and culture have historically been considered instruments to consolidate or legitimize political or economic power, particularly engaging in the preservation of heritage as an important component of nation building. Large museums emerged towards the late 18th century, reflecting the conception that knowledge of the past should be made available to the public. The gradual categorization of arts and heritage significantly influenced international standards and policy discussions. In comparison, the culture sector has been less explicitly driven by public policies in North America, with greater involvement of the private and non-profit sector.

Approaches to cultural policies differ widely across the region, particularly regarding definitions and conceptions of culture, culture governance systems, as well as areas of focus. For example, the Netherlands’ cultural policy includes the fields of cultural heritage, media and the arts. In Bulgaria, cultural policy involves any ‘activity associated with the creation, study, dissemination and protection of cultural values, as well as the results of this activity’, while in Belgium, the legal definition of culture covers ten different fields, including youth, physical education, as well as leisure and tourism. In Canada, celebrating cultural diversity and multiculturalism is a fundamental characteristic of its cultural policy. Despite this large diversity of approaches, the high level of ratification of UNESCO Culture Conventions is reflected in national policies and their implementation.

Over the last decades, cultural policies have significantly evolved across the region, in their scope, priority focus and implementation modalities. Although state-led policy interventions and funding remain crucial in the region, local authorities have also become crucial stakeholders in the design and implementation of cultural policies. Even in the field of heritage, which has historically been considered a concern of the State, cities have taken a larger role in the inventorying, safeguarding and management of cultural heritage. Likewise, the role of civil society has been increasingly recognized across the region and has sometimes

been enshrined in the overarching principles of cultural policies, particularly in Northern European countries. Public funding for culture remains substantial in Europe and a large part of the culture sector remains reliant on public subsidies. Some countries have more centralized, state-driven systems such as France and Italy, others have more decentralized systems such as in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UK) and the Netherlands (where the art councils operate as independent arts funds). In systems such as those in Germany and Belgium, responsibility for culture is devolved to the regional level. Overall, cultural policies across the region remain guided by the conviction that culture cannot be left to the market alone, because of its specificity and its core function in society.

## REGIONAL DYNAMICS: A GROWING INTEREST IN CULTURE

Although cultural policies in Europe remain a national prerogative, European institutions play an increasing role in fostering cooperation, knowledge sharing and, to some extent, the regulation of the culture sector. The European Union (EU) covers twenty-eight countries<sup>1</sup> in the region and, although regional economic development was its initial focus, respect for cultural diversity is among its core principles. The need to promote shared European values has become equally essential, in a context where European multilateralism is being challenged by various social and economic crises. The adoption of the 2007 European Agenda for Culture was a turning point, also reflecting the overall policy impact of the EU's adherence to the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005). It was followed a year later by the European Commission's introduction of the Open Method of Coordination for the culture sector – a method of intergovernmental coordination where European policy complements the national policies of its Member States. Many EU cultural policies are enacted through the European Commission (EC), which is the executive branch.



***The Union shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore. Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union: Article 167***

Besides the EU, the Council of Europe – covering forty-seven countries – has long had an influence on the culture agenda across the region. The very first European Cultural Convention was adopted by the Council in 1954, with the aim of fostering mutual understanding among Europe's people. Since then, the Council has been strongly engaged in the culture sector. It serves as a platform to assess and analyse national cultural policies – notably through the compendium of cultural policies – exploring cross-sectoral linkages between cultural policies and other policy fields, including human rights and freedom of expression. The Council also promotes a comprehensive vision of culture as a strong contributor to other policy areas. The 2017 European Heritage Strategy for the 21st Century, for example, clearly prioritizes culture's role in advancing social participation, territorial and economic development and education.

The Council of Ministers of Culture of South-East Europe (CoMoCoSEE) consisting of twelve countries is a sub-regional policy platform on culture, established in 2005, that provides a space to promote culture, to stimulate intercultural dialogue and shared memory.

<sup>1</sup> Correct as of 15 October 2019. Figure does not presuppose any evolution of EU membership.

CoMoCoSEE is strengthening cultural cooperation in the Western Balkan sub-region, notably through the ‘Enhancing Culture for Sustainable Development’ strategy adopted in 2014 in Ohrid, North Macedonia, through which a number of UNESCO projects funded by the EU have been conducted. Culture has proven to be an important vehicle for social cohesion in a sub-region that has experienced identity-based conflict. It has also proven instrumental in fostering cooperation and mobility among cultural professionals, although recent socio-economic difficulties call for further efforts to reinforce cultural cooperation.



## HERITAGE, CREATIVITY AND CULTURAL PARTICIPATION: THE THREE PILLARS OF CULTURAL POLICIES

Europe’s cultural policies broadly cover three main areas, namely i) the preservation of heritage, ii) support to arts and creativity, and iii) access to culture. Firstly, Heritage remains the core pillar of European cultural policies. Approaches to heritage have gradually evolved over the last decades from a focus on monuments to a comprehensive, territorial approach. The UNESCO Recommendation on the Historical Urban Landscape (2011), which reflects this paradigm shift, was widely welcomed by experts in the region and has also translated into national heritage policies. More contemporary categories of heritage have also received growing interest, notably modern heritage or industrial heritage, as reflected in the UNESCO World Heritage inscriptions over the last decade. Digitalization of heritage, including intangible cultural heritage, is also a strong focus, not only for safeguarding purposes but also for education. Cultural components are also found more broadly across other policy areas – both at national and regional levels – including education, research, social policy and international relations.

Secondly, the creative economy is also a high priority in both Europe and North America. In the EU, the creative sector is estimated to generate around US\$ 556 billion annually, representing 5.3% of the EU’s GDP and 12 million jobs, making it the EU’s third largest employer (European Commission, 2018). In Canada, the sector represents US\$53.1 billion and provides 666,500 jobs (Canada Voluntary National Review, 2018). The fashion, design, music and film industries are sizeable in both Europe and North America. Whereas Europe’s approach to creativity has long been based on consolidating national cultural identity, Canada’s has been more focused on displaying its diversity as a key asset, notably as part of its 2018 Creative Export Strategy. New technologies and digital platforms are changing the way in which people create, access and experience culture. They offer new ways of promoting creative products and have the potential to make culture more inclusive and accessible. New challenges linked to digital technologies – including big data and the accelerated growth of artificial intelligence – are increasingly reflected in public policies. The Canadian Province of Quebec has one of the most advanced policy frameworks in the

**The Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market is the first regional policy on copyright regulation in the digital environment, with a view to ensuring the fair remuneration of artists.**

form of its Digital Cultural Plan, adopted following extensive consultation. The European Parliament also took the important step of adopting the Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market in March 2019, becoming the first region to adapt copyright regulation in the digital environment, with a view to ensuring the fair remuneration of artists.

Thirdly, ensuring equal access to culture and participation in cultural life is another core component of cultural policies across Europe. While in the 1970s and 1980s, cultural policies tended to focus on the democratization of culture, increasing focus is now placed on cultural participation as a lever for social inclusion, and as a core component of a vibrant democratic society, conducive to the values of tolerance and trust. However, recent trends show that access to culture remains unequal across Europe, both within countries and between countries. Ensuring cultural participation thus remains a top priority of national and regional cultural policies.

To support this transversal approach to culture, significant efforts have been made over the last decade within the European Union to improve data collection, building notably on data collected by Eurostat. For example, in 1998 the Compendium of Cultural Policies and Trends was set up by the Council of Europe's Steering Committee for Culture, in harmony with the European Cultural Convention. It provides an online information and monitoring system of national cultural policies and their contribution to other sectoral policies. The Council of Europe's Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy maps European trends in access to and participation in culture, and demonstrates the links between culture and democracy. At the city level, the Cultural and Creative Cities Monitor was developed with support from the EU to monitor and assess the performance of cities around dimensions such as cultural participation, creative and knowledge-based jobs, cultural facilities, openness, tolerance and trust. Some countries in the study area, notably Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, have also implemented the UNESCO Culture for Development Indicators (CDIS), which helped to build capacity of national statistical institutes to collect culture-related data.

**Over the last 12 months, 85% of the population in Denmark or Sweden went to the cinema, attended a live performance or visited a cultural site. The figure is 27% in Romania or 37% in Croatia.**

**Eurostat, Cultural participation by cultural activity (2015)**

## HARNESSING CULTURAL DIVERSITY TO FOSTER REGIONAL CULTURAL IDENTITY

In Europe, cultural policies have traditionally been linked to national cultural identities, meaning that leveraging cultural policies to develop a stronger European identity, based on common cultural values, has long remained a challenge. European cultural programmes such as the European Capitals of Culture have proven successful in contributing to a regional narrative on European identity and the value of culture. Meanwhile, the EU has gradually scaled up its policy efforts. The 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage was an opportunity to reinforce a sense of belonging to a common European space that raised awareness about built, natural and intangible heritage as well as the importance of digitising cultural resources to preserve

heritage. The new European Agenda for Culture was also adopted that year, focusing on cultural heritage: sustainable development, social cohesion, equality and well-being, as well as support to artists and cultural professionals to stimulate the creation of new European cultural content and international cultural relations. Other initiatives include Creative Europe, the European Heritage Label, as well as European Heritage Days and European Development Days.

Overall, cultural pluralism and intercultural dialogue have not been a core element of cultural policies across Europe, despite the adoption of the 2000 Declaration on Cultural Diversity by the Council of Europe. The countries of the CoMoCoSEE are the exception, as the region has made intercultural dialogue a priority. Policies on cultural pluralism remain largely absent at the EU level and disputed at the national level. European societies have grown increasingly diverse in recent years, in part due to a large influx of migrants, particularly from Africa and the Middle East, many of whom are fleeing conflict. In this context, Europe's cultural policies have, at times, struggled to adapt to the combined priorities of European integration and harnessing diversity. In some countries, the relative ambivalence of cultural policies towards multiculturalism, or competing identity-driven policy objectives, have raised challenges for social cohesion. Policies at the city-level, in many cases, have proven more agile in terms of implementing more innovative policies that incorporate cultural diversity and pluralism, including through the 103 European cities of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network.

In Canada, by contrast, multiculturalism and the safeguarding of indigenous culture are among the core policy areas. The Canadian Multiculturalism Act (1988) laid the foundations for this approach, advocating for the development of policies, programmes and services that address and respond to the evolving diversity. The preservation of indigenous cultures is also an important feature of Canada's cultural policies, aligned with the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2008-2015) that investigated past injustices against the indigenous people. As a result, in 2019, a parliamentary act on respecting indigenous languages was proposed, with a view to revitalising indigenous languages. Diversity and pluralism are also considered as fundamental characteristics of Canadian society. Canada's 2019 budget included 45 million Canadian dollars to develop and implement a new Anti-Racism Strategy, with a focus on community-based projects. Canada is also a strong advocate for pluralism and diversity, at the international level.

There is a strong tendency across the whole of the region to harness education to boost creativity, enhance intercultural dialogue and empower youth. In the past three years, for example, Cyprus and Latvia have reported expanding educational provision for arts, music and cultural creativity. Countries such as France, Romania and Switzerland use culture to improve language acquisition, combat racism and promote intercultural dialogue, respectively. In Turkey, culture is a core element of programmes aimed at engaging youth in social life. Similarly, the social and educational role of museums receives increasing interest, notably

**Art and culture are expressions that build society, and cultural policy must be based on freedom of speech and tolerance. The cultural sector and civil society are prerequisites for an educated and enlightened public, and thus an investment in democracy. Culture must be free, based on personal involvement and voluntarism. [...]**

**In a world in which the public sphere is becoming increasingly fragmented, art and culture can educate, shape and strengthen communities and the societal structure around us. Immigration is a source of new impulses and cultural exchange. Variation leads to new thinking, innovation and creativity. A bold and targeted cultural policy will serve as an effective tool for the promotion of positive developments in society.**

*Cultural policy of Norway (2018)*

through a growing focus on accessibility and audience development. Arts education is also a growing focus of both cultural and educational policies, with the belief that cultural awareness and creative skills are among the core competences, particularly in the evolving job market. This is reflected by the ongoing study on ‘Teaching, Assessing and Learning Creative and Critical Thinking Skills in Education’, conducted by the European Commission and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

## CULTURE AND THE 2030 AGENDA

The EU has strongly aligned its policies to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and culture provides several opportunities to bolster this approach. Socio-economic inequality has been on the rise over the past decades and has intensified since the onset of the 2008 global financial crisis. Fostering culture’s contribution to social inclusion and well-being is therefore a major priority area across the region in line with SDG 10 (on reducing inequalities). Cultural institutions are making stronger commitments to improve social accessibility, building on the potential of new technologies. For example, the ‘micro-folies’ model of mobile and low-cost digital museums – originally developed in the cultural park La Villette (Paris, France) in 2017 – has quickly expanded to several countries across the region. Social innovation is also being spearheaded at the city level, where new types of multidisciplinary cultural institutions that combine cultural, educational and social services, have been developed in deprived urban areas, often with the support from the civil society. The House for the Future and Social Innovation in Vienna, Austria, is among the examples. This societal potential of culture is reflected in the EU’s new European Agenda for Culture, as well as in funding trends (notably the Horizon 2020 programme on ‘the societal value of culture and the impact of cultural policies’).

Although cultural tourism is a leading economic sub-sector in the European Union countries but, in recent years, it has put pressure on UNESCO World Heritage sites. Expanding the tourism offer to relieve pressure on major destinations, ensuring more direct benefits to the local economy, while also promoting meaningful tourism experiences to build cultural awareness, are among the policy objectives. The commitment to sustainable tourism in the region is notably reflected in the promotion of cultural routes. A number of other initiatives funded by or initiated by the EU also work towards promoting sustainable tourism, such as the European Destinations of Excellence or the European Capitals of Smart Tourism. As part of the Work Plan for Culture, a working group of Member States developed policy recommendations, including a revised definition of cultural tourism. The European Tourism Indicators System also supports tourism destinations monitoring sustainable management practices. Some countries of South-East Europe are also developing their tourism sectors in this vein.

**European cultural routes are aimed at raising awareness of European cultural heritage, while encouraging visitors to discover more remote or ‘hidden’ sites, local knowledge, skills and heritage. To demonstrate this concept, UNESCO created, with support from the EU, the World Heritage Journeys in Europe travel platform, launched in 2018. The website features rich content from 38 World Heritage sites across 19 countries that promotes responsible travel, more meaningful tourism experiences, away from major destinations.**

Supporting urban regeneration and the ecological transition is another area where culture can make an even more significant contribution across the region in line with SDG 11 (on sustainable cities and communities). Over the past decades, many cities in the region have undergone a process of culture-led regeneration, focusing notably on the rehabilitation of built cultural heritage, the adaptive reuse of derelict industrial structures for creative activities or the development of ‘cultural generators’, such as museums or cultural infrastructure. Particular focus has been laid on improving the quality of public space, upgrading housing or urban services in historic areas or leveraging the creative sector to drive post-industrial conversion. These strategies have directly contributed to the sustainable development agenda – notably by encouraging the reuse of the existing building stock and now represent a large share of the ecological transition efforts across the region.

## INTERNATIONAL DYNAMICS: CULTURAL COOPERATION

Through their international cooperation policies, Europe and North America also influence cultural policies worldwide, particularly through Official Development Assistance (ODA) (OECD, 2019). The EU alone is the first ODA partner worldwide. Although the culture sector remains modest in its external cooperation portfolio, it is gaining importance. In 2019, the ‘Communication Towards an EU Strategy for International Cultural Relations’ was adopted to encourage cultural cooperation between the EU and partner countries. The Africa Caribbean and Pacific Culture Programme, for example, supports the creation and production of quality content, access to markets and distribution in countries in these regions. Since 2011, the EU has supported the Expert Facility of the UNESCO Convention for the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) that provides expertise to strengthen the governance of culture in developing countries, a core priority across EU culture-related policies. More specialized programmes, such as the Ethical Fashion Initiative, which promotes skills related to the cotton value chain in West Africa, or the Media Mundus programme to support the audiovisual sector in the Global South, also boost the culture sector in beneficiary countries. More recently, the EU has also given prominent support to the fight against illicit trafficking and the safeguarding of heritage in conflict and post-conflict situations, through a number of major joint projects implemented by UNESCO. ODA policies are also increasingly combined with cultural diplomacy, a growing priority across Europe. Discussions recently initiated by some countries on the restitution of cultural property are also likely to foster international cultural cooperation, while setting the stage for a new dialogue on the subject.

At the national level, bilateral cooperation policies also contribute greatly to global ODA, with countries’ respective areas of cooperation often reflecting the legacy of historical ties between these countries. While development aid has tended to focus on areas such as education, water and health, the culture sector has represented a significant area of cooperation for some countries, notably Norway and Sweden. The networks of cultural centres supported by countries such as Germany (Goethe Institut), France (Institut français), UK (British Council) and Spain (Instituto Cervantes) contribute to capacity-building, access to culture and intercultural dialogue. Increasing attention is being given to culture within other more traditional cooperation areas such as urban development, particularly through projects targeting the rehabilitation of built heritage or the development of the creative sector.

The region of Europe and North America has a long history of cultural policies and a strong adherence to international norms, with Member States adapting definitions of cultural policies to suit their needs.

The European Union, in particular, has been at the forefront of contemporary cultural policy debates, such as the protection of copyright in the digital space. Increased interest in cultural cooperation – through the EU, the Council of Europe and CoMoCoSEE – are bearing fruit, with innovative initiatives such as cooperation to protect World Heritage sites from the adverse effects of mass tourism, as well as efforts for peace-building and multiculturalism. Building on strong heritage and creativity policies, countries in the study area could further harness culture as a tool to tackle emerging challenges, such as social inclusion, particularly in urban spaces with their increasingly diverse populations. Fostering a broader European regional identity would also contribute to this aim and – whilst recent policy initiatives have been positive – could be even further expanded through increased arts education provision.

# HIGHLIGHTS

- The sub-region places great emphasis on intercultural dialogue, due to its history at the heart of the silk roads where different cultures blended.
  - Cultural policies in the region have a strong focus on heritage to foster strong national cultural identities, and the sub-region has strong systems in place for the transmission, including through digital platforms.
  - Sub-regional cooperation in the field of culture is growing with heritage and youth projects constituting important areas of cooperation.
  - Strong arts education policies that mainly focus on skills development and the transmission of tradition, more than creativity and innovation, are integrated into school curricula.
  - Whilst all countries have adopted national plans for attaining the Goals of the 2030 Agenda, culture often remains a specialised policy domain despite its potential for encouraging tourism and designing more inclusive urban policies.



Armenia • Azerbaijan • Belarus • Georgia •  
Kazakhstan • Kyrgyzstan • Republic of Moldova  
• Russian Federation • Tajikistan • Turkmenistan •  
Ukraine • Uzbekistan





## A REGION SHAPED BY MULTIPLE INFLUENCES

The study area – the twelve countries of Central Asia, the South Caucasus and Eastern Europe – covers an extremely broad and diverse geographic area, where influences from Europe, the Middle East and Asia merge with Central Asian traditions, making the region culturally and ethnically very diverse. The countries of Eastern Europe in general have the highest urbanization level, even though Central Asian countries are home to vast rural areas, a relative majority of the population lives in cities, leaving rural areas with extremely low population densities. Overall, the region is experiencing rapid rates of urbanization and industrialization, putting pressure on urban cultural heritage. Cities of the region are characterised by a social mix that encourages diversity in society.

The region's common history as part of the former Soviet Union continues to be reflected in its institutional models, and financial and administrative systems. These policy frameworks form a common foundation for the region's evolving policies. In the early 1990s, culture became an important tool for the newly independent countries to forge national cultural identity and integrate into the international community. This can be seen in the increasing attention paid to the conservation of monumental and moveable heritage, and in the revival of intangible cultural heritage, such as the development of cultural festivals. In recent years, attention has increasingly been directed towards the creative economy, as well as cultural tourism.

The region's shared history as part of the former Soviet Union, is continued through the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which is the largest regional body in the study area. Although the CIS has not, as of yet, developed a dedicated cultural policy or strategy, the development of a joint legal framework for culture is being discussed, which could give further impetus to regional cooperation and strengthen the role of the culture sector. In recent years, culture has gained an increasingly important role at this regional level. In 2006, a subsidiary body responsible for culture was created: the Intergovernmental Foundation for Educational, Scientific and Cultural Cooperation of the CIS, whose aim is to further the development of cooperation in the areas of education, science, culture, communication, information, archives, sport, tourism and youth. Members include Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, the Russian Federation, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. In 2011, the Commission on Social Policy and Human Rights developed regional Recommendations for the Implementation of the UNESCO Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) and its Protocols, which is significant as a regional-level policy related to culture and heritage.

The growing interest in culture was clearly demonstrated in 2018, which was declared the Year of Culture by the CIS. During the year, some ninety international and national events were held and included the safeguarding and use of historical and cultural heritage monuments and museums, as well as theatre, music and film events. Many of these initiatives brought people from across the region together around specific cultural topics and activities. For example, the Russian Federation hosted the Youth Cultural Forum of CIS countries; Azerbaijan hosted the Kara Karaev International Festival of Contemporary Music; and Tajikistan offered young people an opportunity to exchange experiences on working with heritage through the youth forum 'Volunteering for Preservation of Cultural Heritage in CIS'.



## CULTURAL POLICIES TO STRENGTHEN NATIONAL CULTURAL IDENTITY

Cultural policies in Central Asia, the South Caucasus and Eastern Europe tend to focus on two priority areas i) policies focusing on the role of culture for building national cultural identity and ii) cultural policies for fostering international and regional cooperation. The culture sectors of countries in the region tend to be governed by a very coherent and comprehensive body of legislation, ranging from constitutions that contain the main provisions guaranteeing cultural freedoms and state support for culture, to laws and decrees that govern national policy priorities or specific areas of the culture sector.

International cultural conventions also form the basis of many of the national policies of the region, with universal ratification of the UNESCO Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (1954) and the UNESCO World Heritage Convention (1972). In addition, 11 out of 12 countries have ratified the UNESCO Convention on the Prevention of the Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property (1970) and the UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003).

This interest in international culture conventions is also reflected in the region's efforts to nominate heritage elements to the various lists and registers maintained by UNESCO. Central Asia, Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus, count 66 properties on the World Heritage List, most of which are cultural heritage sites (43).

Three sites – the Struve Geodetic Arc; Silk Roads: the Routes Network of the Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor; and the Western Tien-Shan – are transboundary World Heritage properties, linking different countries in the region and beyond. These transboundary listings are recent additions to the UNESCO World Heritage list that not only reflect the cultural linkages within the region but also indicate an increased interest in cooperating for heritage protection. Countries in the South Caucasus, as well as Kyrgyzstan and Belarus, for example, have made international cooperation in the field of culture one of the main pillars of their cultural policies.

The influence of international instruments at a national level is expressed through the emphasis on the safeguarding of cultural values, which is often combined and the promotion of cultural diversity through socio-cultural programmes for young people. Most of these national policies continue to focus on tangible and intangible cultural heritage. They often focus on local traditions and folk art (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan) – or emphasize the role of heritage and traditional cultural expressions, including language, for national cultural identity (Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Russian Federation and Ukraine).

**The 2014 inscription of the Silk Roads**  
**The Routes Network of Chang'an-Tianshan Corridor is a 5,000 km section of the extensive silk roads network, stretching from the Zhetysu region of Central Asia to Chang'an/Luoyang, the central capital of China in the Han and Tang dynasties. It took shape between the 2nd century BC and 1st century AD and remained in use until the early 16th century, linking multiple civilizations and facilitating far-reaching exchanges of activities in trade, religious beliefs, scientific knowledge, technological innovation, cultural practices and the arts. The property was jointly nominated by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and China.**  
*UNESCO World Heritage website*

The Kazakh policy, *Rukhani Zhangyru*, has a particular focus on national cultural identity, covering multiple aspects of culture ranging from arts education to language but also aims to integrate more contemporary expressions of identity. Enhancing and popularizing traditional heritage among the general public, and linking this to the development of museums and cultural centres, can be seen as part of these strategies to promote a national cultural identity in the region. Cultural policies in the Russian Federation, for example, include provisions for increasing cultural access in rural areas by developing cultural centres, among other initiatives.

As culture and heritage have traditionally been considered to be the prerogative of the State, the culture sector continues to depend primarily on public funding. In Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, most of the funding for the culture sector derives from the national budget, whereas the role of regional and local budgets remains relatively limited, covering only a quarter of all expenses. In most other countries in the region, 30–35% for the culture sector of financial resources derive from national budgets, and the rest from regional and local budgets. The exception is the Russian Federation, where the federal funding portion of the culture sector budget amounts to about 18%, although a large-scale programme for the development of cultural tourism is almost entirely funded at the federal level. This public funding is largely used to finance culture organizations and institutions for the general public, many of which rely on government funds for about 80% of their budget (UNESCO, EI-Pikir, 2019). Overall, however, a shortfall in funding still remains an important challenge for the culture sector. The lack of fully developed tools for attracting private investment also remains a reality in the study area. A recent trend in the increase of public-private partnerships is emerging however. Tax incentives, for example, have been introduced in the culture sector in a few countries, such as the Russian Federation, Uzbekistan and Ukraine. Sponsorship is also regularly provided by foundations created by private companies.

Most countries in the region have regulatory frameworks conducive to the development of civil society, however, policies that specifically target the development of civil society are not available in all countries, but provisions are usually included in national development strategies, constitutions and government decrees. The presence of professional organizations that work in the field of intangible cultural heritage can be viewed as an excellent opportunity to strengthen the contribution of culture to sustainable development. Moreover, many countries have national unions of craftspeople or artists that largely contribute to the vibrancy of culture at the national level. Some unions also have a regional scope, such as the Central Asian Crafts Support Association.



## THE 2030 AGENDA AND INCLUSIVE CULTURAL POLICIES

Following the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, all countries in the region have developed national plans or strategies that include the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). However, the integration of culture in these plans or strategies

is rather uneven, and culture's contribution to sustainable development at the national level is not fully acknowledged. In addition, most countries have adopted long-term plans and programmes for culture, which seem to operate independently from other development sectors. That said, a number of overarching tendencies in the region do contribute to the SDGs – despite not being fully integrated into national development policies – particularly policies for social inclusion and policies fostering intercultural dialogue in line with SDG 10 (reducing inequalities). These experiences could be replicated and enhanced to address emerging challenges in the region, building on the holistic nature of the 2030 Agenda.

Vis-à-vis the changing rural-urban dynamic, some countries in the study area are facing significant difficulties in meeting the cultural needs of extensive rural areas and rapidly growing urban centres in comprehensive national policy strategies. The shifting demographics are currently rarely reflected in cultural policies, which do not tend to systematically address issues of urbanization. The demand for culture is growing in urban areas, and new museums and galleries are opening. However, these developments tend to prioritize major urban centres. In large cities and smaller cities alike, community-level cultural projects are gaining momentum largely due to civil society participation, including through city festivals that build a sense of identity. The culture sector is well developed in the vast rural areas of the region, which are home to most cultural and leisure institutions – a legacy of the Soviet era. These rural areas are reached through local institutions, which organize a variety of activities and are often at the core of keeping folk traditions and culture alive. In the last few decades, intangible cultural heritage, including the development of handicrafts, has proved vital to the economies of small to medium-sized cities, particularly in Central Asia, although this economic potential is increasingly under pressure due to the growth of international markets.

**All countries in the region have integrated Sustainable Development Goals in their national policy documents, which mostly cover the period until 2020-2024.**

During the period from 2000 to 2017, there was a noticeable decrease in the number of cultural and leisure facilities in much of the region (UNESCO, El-Pikir, 2019). This, however, does not mean that rural access to culture is declining but rather that other institutions, like libraries and digital platforms, are often taking over their functions. They not only ensure local cultural life, they also provide access to national and international information networks

**The use of information and communication technologies to preserve and digitize objects of cultural and historical heritage, connecting public libraries and culture facilities to the Internet have been actively promoted in the region.**

*(UNESCO, El-Pikir, 2019)*

and databases through the use of information and communication technology. This strategy of preserving and digitizing objects of cultural and historical heritage by connecting public libraries and culture facilities to the Internet has been actively promoted at the regional level, as part of the Cooperation Strategy of CIS Member States for Building and Developing Information Society.



## ENGAGING YOUNG PEOPLE IN ARTS AND CULTURE

Governments of the region place considerable importance on engaging young people in arts and culture. Particular attention is given to the development of youth arts education, in line with the 2010 Seoul Agenda: Goals for the Development of Arts Education. The Russian Federation, for example, has included arts education in its culture policy and in Georgia, the development of arts education was included as a dedicated section in the Action Plan for the implementation of the 2017-2018 Culture Strategy.

Various policies within the region link culture to education and foster the integration of intangible cultural heritage in school curricula in line with SDG 4 (quality education). In line with the overall focus of cultural policies on traditional arts and crafts – such as pottery, wood processing, weaving and embroidery – these curricula primarily focus on skills development and the transmission of traditional knowledge, more than on innovation and creativity through the arts. In Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, close to 25% of technical and vocational schools provide programmes directly related to intangible cultural heritage, aiming to enhance knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts. According to 2016 data, Tajikistan’s technical and vocational schools offer fourteen educational programmes with 96 specialties, of which 18 specialties are related to intangible cultural heritage. In addition, Uzbekistan adopted a State Programme for the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which has a separate section devoted to advanced training.

However, this emphasis on familiarizing youth with culture through education is far more limited at the tertiary level of education. Only 25% of universities in the region offer culture-related programmes, most of which are in Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, and the Russian Federation. This gap in the provision of culture-related programmes at the tertiary level may be a factor contributing to the region being unable to fully harness the economic potential of the culture sector (UNESCO, EI-Pikir, 2019).

**To safeguard and enhance cultural heritage of ethnic minorities, the Azerbaijan Ministry of Education prepared in 2019 textbooks in native languages such as Talysh, Lezgian, Tsakhur, Khinalug and Avar languages for pupils of 1st to 4th grades of general education schools, in addition to relevant teaching aids.**  
*Azerbaijan Voluntary National Review 2019*



## HARNESSING THE ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF THE CULTURE SECTOR

The potential of culture for economic growth could likely benefit the region, especially in a number of countries facing economic development challenges. Yet, culture is rarely explicitly considered for its income-generating potential, although cultural tourism is an exception. Almost all countries in the study area consider tourism as a priority and most have adopted separate tourism development policies, which include both tangible and intangible cultural heritage and take into consideration a growing interest in the creative sector. The share of

tourism in the GDP remains relatively small across the region. Regarding the creative economy, just over half of the countries in the region have ratified the UNESCO Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005), and this low prioritisation is apparent also in many national policies in the region. The policies of the Eastern Europe group of countries pay greater attention to the creative economy, with Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine all having adopted policies that expand the scope of cultural policy and firmly position culture as an area of development. Very few countries in the study area, other than Armenia and Georgia, include the potential offered by digital and technological advancement among priorities for the culture sector. Where available, the data indicates that the culture sector's contribution to GDP remains minor and rarely amounts to 1% of GDP. Only in Armenia, where the sector has seen a steady growth in the past 5 years, does it exceed 5% (Eurasian Commission, 2019).

Despite the fact that the culture sector is not considered in public policy as having a strong economic potential, the role of the private sector is gradually increasing. Furthermore, cultural policies are generally conducive to patronage and sponsorships from businesses, as well as support from international organizations and foundations. Corporate social responsibility is also gaining interest in the region, ensuring that business goals are more closely aligned with social and cultural development. This is done, for example, through investing in the acquisition of art; the patronage of arts, cultural institutions or heritage sites; and the organization of cultural events. Another way in which private sector investments and culture are collaborating in Central Asia, Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus is through the numerous private TV and radio stations that promote local culture, and advance government policies aimed at promoting culture for national cultural identity. These include Kazakhstan's private TV channel *Bilim zhane Madeniet*, which is dedicated to culture, and in Kyrgyzstan *Sanjar* and *Asia TV*, which have similar objectives.

The lack of systematic, reliable and comprehensive data on the culture sector, however, is hindering the development of more enabling policies to boost the economic potential of the culture sector. It is a usual practice across the region to group cultural statistics together with other sectors, making it harder to discern the true contribution of culture. For example, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan publish cultural data as part of the broader 'art, entertainment, and leisure' sector, and the Russian Federation as part of 'culture, sports, leisure, and entertainment activities'. This suggests that in neither of these cases are data disaggregated for culture. Results are merged with sectors that are often much larger, thereby distorting the view of the role of culture.



## INTERCULTURAL AND INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

A particularly strong feature of cultural policies in the region is the emphasis placed on the importance of diversity and dialogue. Within countries, such dialogue is maintained notably through culture centres and assemblies of peoples. At the regional level, there are numerous interstate structures focusing specifically on culture, like the Assembly of the Peoples of Eurasia. Such structures focus on two key aspects: firstly, religious diversity and, secondly, connecting peoples who have shared cultural roots. The International Organization of Turkic Culture international forum entitled the 'Altai Civilization and related Peoples of the Altai Language Family' is another example.

The study area is home to sizeable Christian and Muslim communities, with all countries having a clear majority of one or the other religious group. Whilst all constitutions have declared a secular state, religion continues to occupy an important place in society and interreligious dialogue is an integral part of intercultural dialogue across the region. All countries of the region have dedicated laws governing religion and almost all have a special government authority that is responsible for religious affairs. Respect for religious diversity is represented in the numerous religious heritage sites that are protected throughout the region. For example, in Ukraine, the St Sophia Cathedral in Kiev, the Wooden Churches of the Carpathian region and the Residence of the Metropolitans of the Orthodox Church of Bukovina and Dalmatia, feature among the World Heritage sites (UNESCO, EI-Pikir, 2019).

Historically at the centre of the silk roads, the region continues to advocate for intercultural dialogue. Not only did the silk roads connect civilizations through the exchange of goods, it also brought peoples and cultures into contact with each other thus shaping our contemporary world. Within the region, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan are particularly strong supporters of the UNESCO Silk Roads Platform (along with China, Germany and Oman). The fruit of 20 years cooperation through the UNESCO Silk Roads Project, this Platform presents information about festivals and creative industries along the silk roads, as well as cultural heritage and museums. The Platform also features traditional crafts know-how, such as silk weaving, social

rituals like Nowruz celebrations, and sporting events such as horsemanship displays that showcase some of the rich intangible cultural heritage of Central Asia, and other regions along the silk roads.



**To build respect and understanding among cultures and amplify voices for moderation, reconciliation and for pluralism.**

*Extract from the Mission Statement of the World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue*

The study area also hosts a number of international events to foster intercultural exchange, demonstrating global leadership on intercultural dialogue. The biannual World Forum on Intercultural Dialogue, held in Baku

(Azerbaijan) brings together participants from over 120 different countries, as well as international and regional organizations. Examples of other initiatives within the region include the CIS Interstate Fund for Humanitarian Cooperation Forum whose theme in 2018 was 'Intercultural Dialogue in the CIS – New Opportunities for Culture, Science, and Education'. The 'Biennial Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions' – held in Astana (Kazakhstan) since 2003 – also has a special significance in the development of the global dialogue among cultures and civilizations. Since 2014, a new initiative of the Kyrgyzstan – the World Nomad Games – aims to support and promote cultural heritage and cultural diversity, particularly traditional sports. In addition, UNESCO, together with the Kazakhstan-India Foundation, has launched the Online Platform on Intercultural Dialogue. This innovative digital education project focuses on the region of Central Asia and Eurasia for the purpose of sharing information – publications, visual, audio, graphic and other interactive materials – related to intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding.

The purpose of the Centre for the Rapprochement of Cultures, established in Almaty (Kazakhstan), is the identification, collection, acquisition, storage, study and promotion of historical and cultural heritage. It will also carry out scientific research and educational activities. Moreover, the work of the Centre also aims at the preservation and promotion of cultural diversity and interreligious dialogue in the countries of Central Asia, on the basis of good practices, humanistic values and the principles of sustainable cultural development, contributing to the objectives of the UNESCO-led 'International Decade for the Rapprochement of Cultures 2013 – 2022'.

# LOOKING AHEAD

The position of the sub-region, at the heart of the historic silk roads, has given it a great wealth of cultural heritage, appreciated for building national cultural identities. The sub-region has well developed cultural policies that are increasingly promoting intercultural dialogue through joint inscriptions to UNESCO-administered lists, building on its traditions at the crossroads of civilizations. The emerging regional dynamic, particularly through the CIS, could help the sub-region respond to changing demographic trends and the needs of the culture sector, including the impact of urbanization. Building on its strong youth and arts education policies, the sub-region could also expand the scope of these policies in order to boost the impact of the cultural and creative industries. More solid data collection frameworks and enhanced dialogue with civil society and private sector actors would further contribute to this aim.

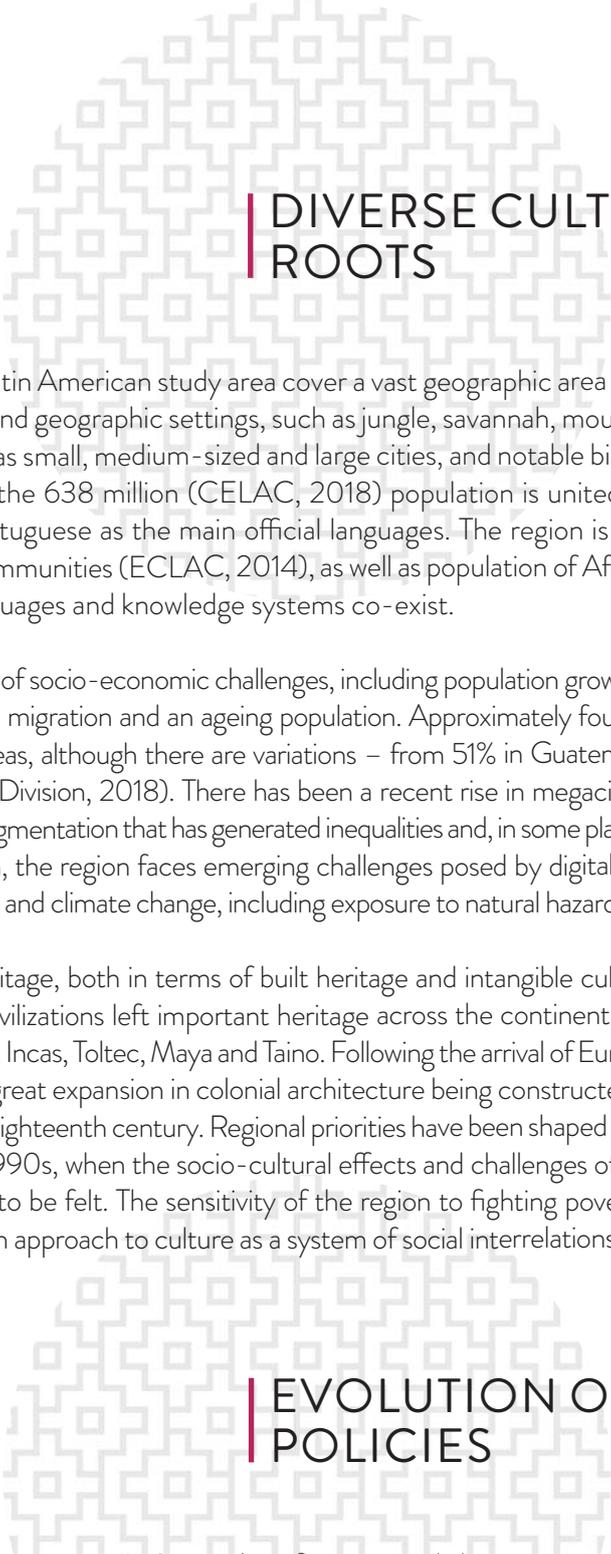
# HIGHLIGHTS

- Latin America has a large multifaceted heritage, both in terms of built heritage and intangible cultural heritage, due to the multiple layers of history from several pre-Colombian civilizations, which form a sense of shared cultural identity within the region.
  - Latin American cultural policies highly value indigenous cultures and biodiversity, constituting a distinctive policy model that is focused on cultural rights and cultural diversity for socio-economic integration.
    - A recent policy shift towards exploring the full economic potential of the culture sector is opening up new opportunities for cultural expressions and new pathways for civil society and private sector involvement.
    - National cultural policy frameworks have been reinforced in recent years, in large part thanks to the resolute impetus through several robust regional organizations, which have a long history.
  - Strong regional cooperation can facilitate harnessing the 2030 Agenda to integrate culture into strategies to tackle challenges, such as urbanization, increasing inequalities, environmental degradation and climate change.



Argentina • Bolivia (Plurinational State of) • Brazil •  
Chile • Colombia • Costa Rica • Ecuador • El Salvador  
• Guatemala • Honduras • Mexico • Nicaragua •  
Panama • Paraguay • Peru • Uruguay  
• Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)





## DIVERSE CULTURAL ROOTS

The 17 countries of the Latin American study area cover a vast geographic area characterized by a diversity of climatic and geographic settings, such as jungle, savannah, mountains, desert and coastal areas, as well as small, medium-sized and large cities, and notable biodiversity and cultural diversity. Whilst the 638 million (CELAC, 2018) population is united linguistically through Spanish and Portuguese as the main official languages. The region is also home to some 800 indigenous communities (ECLAC, 2014), as well as population of African descent. As such, many other languages and knowledge systems co-exist.

The region faces a number of socio-economic challenges, including population growth, high youth unemployment rates, rural migration and an ageing population. Approximately four-fifths of the population live in urban areas, although there are variations – from 51% in Guatemala to 95% in Uruguay (UN Population Division, 2018). There has been a recent rise in megacities and urban sprawl marked by spatial fragmentation that has generated inequalities and, in some places, prompted urban violence. In addition, the region faces emerging challenges posed by digital technologies, environmental degradation and climate change, including exposure to natural hazards.

The region has a large heritage, both in terms of built heritage and intangible cultural heritage. Several pre-Colombian civilizations left important heritage across the continent, including the Aztecs, Zapotecs, Olmecs, Incas, Toltec, Maya and Taino. Following the arrival of European settlers in 1492, there followed a great expansion in colonial architecture being constructed, particularly from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. Regional priorities have been shaped by the political needs of the 1980s and 1990s, when the socio-cultural effects and challenges of transitions to democracy were starting to be felt. The sensitivity of the region to fighting poverty and social exclusion has resulted in an approach to culture as a system of social interrelations.

## EVOLUTION OF CULTURAL POLICIES

Cultural policies in the region initially focused on fine arts and the preservation of cultural heritage. This first generation of policies largely overlooked indigenous cultures and languages or, if they were included, it was from a perspective of folklore. With the development of the humanities across the region and in particular the development of research institutions, such as the Latin American Council of Social Sciences (CLACSO) in 1967, social research flourished. They contributed to processes for the consolidation of democracy, human rights, sustainable development and a culture of peace, and made connections between social research and public policy. It was in this spirit that the only intergovernmental UNESCO centre was established in 1971 in Bogotá, Colombia, to promote the development of books in Latin America and the Caribbean, and that the First Meeting of Ministers of Culture of the Region was held in the region in 1989. The progressive flourishing of regional intergration organizations - such as MERCOSUR, CAN, CARICOM, UNASUR, SICA, ALBA, and CELAC - helped prioritise culture as a lever for development and social inclusion.

As international debates evolved, policies and programmes at the national level strengthened their focus on intangible cultural heritage and cultural diversity as the incarnation of the profound cultural identities of all peoples across Latin America, although built heritage and moveable heritage remain an important pillar of policies. In 1982, the region made an important breakthrough at the international level through the hosting by Mexico of the World Conference on Cultural Policies, *Mondiacult*, held in Mexico City, which was a watershed for evolving concepts in culture and cultural policies. Latin America continues to advocate strongly for contemporary concepts in culture at the international level, for example, in promoting the role of culture for sustainable development in the United Nations, as well as issues such as sustainable gastronomy.

At a regional level, the role of culture as an inherent part of human development has been recognised since the introduction of the Ibero-American Summit of Heads of State and Government in the early 1990s. In 2006, this summit adopted the Ibero-American Cultural Charter, largely inspired by UNESCO’s Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) and by the Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005). In 2018, Heads of States of the Ibero-American countries formally endorsed the notion that culture contributes to sustainable development, at the Summit held in Guatemala that focused specifically on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Furthermore, the Ministers of Culture of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in 2015 developed the CELAC Cultural Action Plan 2015–2020 to contribute to the 2030 Agenda, recognising that culture is an enabler and a driver for sustainable development, peace and economic progress. However, culture still does not necessarily explicitly feature in broader governmental development planning.



***We know that culture is more than a means of progress for humanity; it is in itself a manifestation of this progress.***  
**Rebecca Grynspan, Ibero-American Secretary General**

## STRENGTHENING POLICIES AND GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

The culture sector in Latin American countries is governed by increasingly strong institutions and policy frameworks. Since the late 1980s, most countries in the region have had a governmental entity responsible for cultural affairs. Cultural policies tend to be centralised, with the exceptions of Chile, Peru and Venezuela that have autonomous bodies in each region or district. Over the past ten years, numerous countries in the region have started reviewing their policies and legislation, as well as the institutional set up that governs the sector, including Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, El Salvador and Uruguay. Some countries have created ministries or secretariats of culture (Mexico, 2015; Chile, 2018; El Salvador, 2018; Panama, 2019), reinforcing the previous institutional arrangements. In recent years, civil society groups have been increasingly participating in the development of cultural policies across the region but the level and stage at which they are involved differs. For example, in Chile the Coalition for Cultural Diversity, one of the longest-established coalitions, regularly engages with the government and has successfully advocated for principles from the UNESCO 2005 Convention to be included in trade deals. More broadly, in Latin America, clearer legal frameworks should be developed in order to incentivise the participation of civil society, as there cannot be cultural democracy without civic participation, in line with SDG 16.

In the majority of countries in the region, the culture sector relies heavily on public funding but allocations for culture remain a small part of the state budget. At the 2007 Ibero-American Culture Conference, Ministers of Culture agreed to progressively increase the allocation to culture to 1% of public spending (Valparaiso Declaration 2007). Several countries have begun setting up satellite accounts. Greater inclusion of civil society and the private sector could also diversify funding. For example, the Mexican National Bank (Banamex) supports the National Fund for the Development of Crafts (Fonart) to promote traditional handicrafts. The sector is also increasingly oriented towards the value of cultural diplomacy as an inherent part of international relations. Brazil and Mexico, for example, have made significant efforts in recent

**Ministers of Culture have agreed to progressively increase the allocation to culture to 1% of public spending.**

years to enhance the visibility of their culture sector by systematically including cultural elements in their trade agreements, both bilaterally and internationally.

However, the large degree of fragmentation of data related to cultural activities is hampering development of the sector. There have however been advances in the past few years. An increasing number of surveys have been conducted on cultural consumption amongst the population, help governments ensure that policies reflect the needs of the country. Furthermore, a number of countries in the region, such as Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Uruguay, have participated in the UNESCO Culture for Development Indicators initiative and several countries in the region have expressed an interest in employing the new UNESCO Thematic Indicators for Culture. Efforts to harmonise these indicators at regional level would help facilitate policy adaption.



**INCLUSION, CULTURAL RIGHTS AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLE**

A distinguishing feature of culture policies in Latin America is their approach to cultural diversity and cultural rights. The UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity (2001) made a significant impact on cultural policies in the region, which led to the emergence of state-level secretariats, ministries and departments of culture that were to work with artists and cultural actors to increase the population's access to arts and culture. To reflect this paradigm shift, countries such as Ecuador (2016) and Mexico (2017) approved dedicated legislation on cultural rights. Uruguay is awaiting the final approval of its draft National Law of Culture and Cultural Rights, whilst Costa Rica's National Policy on Cultural Rights 2014–2023 connects diversity, the effective exercise of cultural rights and the exploration of the economic dimension of culture.

Intangible cultural heritage has also become an important vehicle for social cohesion. For example, the joint nomination to the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage by Belize, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua recognised the indigenous and African-origin culture of the Garifuna community, helping to raise awareness of the region's complex past. In Panama, the 2018 inscription of the ritual and festive expressions of the Congo culture was also a participative process that brought communities together. In Colombia, intangible cultural heritage

**In 2016, with the support of the Itaú Cultural Observatory of Sao Paulo, an International Intercultural Coexistence Index (ICI) was created to revitalize the debate that has marked Latin America's cultural policy sector for decades, taking into account shifting realities. The aim is to further advance the development of relevant policies and a deepening the paradigm of diversity to move further beyond the purely aesthetic dimensions of the culture sector, for example by focusing on living together and building relationships.**

is being used as a tool for reconciliation. UNESCO is supporting local communities from El Conejo – territory formerly affect by armed conflict – to reintegrate former combatants into civilian life through providing a space for dialogue, collective memory and the cultural aspects of their territory in order to revitalise the social fabric. These examples show the contribution of culture to sustainable development, although the available tools may have to be further refined.

This shift in policy focus to cultural rights has particularly had an impact on the region's 45 million indigenous people, who represent approximately 8% (World Bank, 2015) of the region's population and live predominantly in Bolivia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico and Peru. Several countries in the region have adopted legislation that protect indigenous rights and cultures. Chile, in particular has made great progress, signing into law in 2016 measures that created a Ministry of Indigenous People, as well as Indigenous People's Councils. Paraguay is also in the process of designing its National Plan of Indigenous Peoples with and for the indigenous peoples communities, which will include social and cultural rights at the heart of its institutional framework. In terms of concrete measures for social inclusion, Mexico has a National Museum of Popular Cultures dedicated to the promotion and dissemination of popular and indigenous culture and Peru has trained interpreters and translators in indigenous languages to ensure dialogue between indigenous peoples and the State. The United Nations International Year of Indigenous Languages 2019 is particularly significant for the region. This celebration, coordinated by UNESCO, aims to raise awareness about the connection between language, culture, knowledge systems and ways of life.

## CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND BIODIVERSITY: TWO FACES OF THE SAME COIN

The linkages between biodiversity and cultural diversity, present in the 2001 Universal Declaration on Culture Diversity, have also been an inspiration to the countries of the region in terms of policy-making. The study area (in addition to the Caribbean) is home to 34% of the world's plant species and 27% of mammals, making it one of the world's biodiversity 'superpowers'. A fifth of the region's territory has been set aside for conservation – far surpassing the developing world average of 13% (World Bank, 2015). This wealth of natural resources, the variety of geographies, as well as the diversity of indigenous populations has served as the basis for traditional knowledge, heritage, arts and other forms of cultural expressions.

There are some 37 UNESCO natural World Heritage properties in Latin America, a sign of the wealth of the region's biodiversity. There are also a great number of intangible cultural heritage practices (some of which are inscribed on UNESCO lists) that demonstrate the link between biodiversity and cultural diversity of the indigenous groups. For example, the Yaokwa people of Brazil preserve the extremely delicate and fragile ecosystem in the southern Amazon rainforest

that is currently under threat from deforestation and invasive practices. The Bolivian Kallawayas preserve an expansive knowledge of some 980 species of medicinal plants, making their botanical pharmacopoeia rates among the richest in the world. The indigenous Quechua cosmivision centred on humanity as an integral part of the natural and social environment – ‘sumak kawsay’ or ‘well-being’, was integrated into the Constitution of Ecuador in 2008, making it the first country to recognize rights to nature in its constitution.



***We decided to construct a new form of citizen co-existence, in diversity and harmony with nature, to reach ‘el buen vivir, el sumak kawsay’.***

*The preamble of the 2008 Constitution of Ecuador*

The region is also exposed to natural hazards, such as earthquakes, hurricanes and tsunamis, often exacerbated by climate change factors. Indigenous knowledge holds the potential to offer solutions for reducing the risk of disasters. For example, the use of local materials or the traditional management of mangroves, coral reefs and rocky shores to combat risks. Indigenous people have highlighted the need to incorporate traditional knowledge in education and capacity-building concerning the issue of climate change. For example, by growing drought-resistant strains of crops or maintaining beneficial cropping practices can contribute to resilient food systems. Some Latin American countries already acknowledge the importance of indigenous knowledge in finding sustainable solutions to climate change and disasters.

## THE 2030 AGENDA AND EMERGING CHALLENGES

Almost all countries of the region have ratified the UNESCO World Heritage Convention (1972), yet inscriptions tend to focus on built heritage and the small number of natural and mixed sites inscribed on the World Heritage list in the region does not reflect its great diversity. Mass tourism is an important management issue at both natural and cultural World Heritage sites. For example, whilst tourism represents 50% of revenue of the Galapagos Islands (Ecuador), it is also one of the most important threats to the islands’ environmental sustainability (UNESCO, 2016). There are two UNESCO centres in the region that build capacity in terms of World Heritage management – the Regional Heritage Management Training Centre in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) and the Regional World Heritage Centre in Zacatecas (Mexico). Another UNESCO centre in Peru focuses on the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. The illicit trafficking of cultural property, including pre-conquest artefacts and colonial sacred art, continues to be a problem in the region. Through coordination at a regional level, progress has been made to put in place tools to prevent such objects from being sold on the art market. Ecuador has also developed a ‘Manual of Contingency Procedures in Historical Archives for Natural Disasters’, following the 2016 earthquake and subsequent illicit trafficking of cultural goods, which could form the basis of further regional efforts.

Heritage in the urban setting could also help foster community identities and has in recent years emerged as a rallying point. Latin American cities are characterised by social and spatial segregation. More than 40 World Heritage properties in the region are categorized as urban heritage. A number of historic cities, such as Rio de Janeiro (Brazil), Cartagena de Indias (Colombia), Cusco (Peru) and Mexico City (Mexico) have acknowledged the importance of urban heritage also for their economic value, through tourism. However, in much of the region, urban heritage is under threat. Following the experiences of the 1990s, when urban regeneration

often led to gentrification, more recent interventions have focused on renovating plazas and waterfront areas, or integrating transportation systems in historic urban centres, sparking wider regeneration of the surrounding areas without displacing local populations. Other cities have opted to put creativity at the heart of their local development strategies, including the 25 cities from the region that are members of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network, building on their vibrant and multifaceted cultural expressions, popular folk traditions, arts, crafts and gastronomy.



## A GROWING ECONOMIC POTENTIAL IN THE FACE OF THE 2030 AGENDA

The economic potential of the culture sector in the majority of Latin American countries remains under-utilised. Discussions at Mondiacult first brought about a redirection of policies within the region, albeit with a relatively traditional approach, concentrating on crafts and traditional knowledge that resonated with the socially inclusive preoccupation of the region. The UNESCO 2005 Convention and the 2030 Agenda have given extra impetus to consider culture as a strategic sector for the creation of decent work and the promotion of sustainable cultural tourism, in line with SDGs 8 and 9.

Moving beyond the informal creative economy generated by crafts, design and the performing arts, towards a broader concept of cultural and creative industries has required a further change in policy frameworks. All countries of the region have taken actions to promote and develop cultural and creative industries with the aim of making them more productive and efficient, including through such sectors as gastronomy. Among the main obstacles for its development are financial restrictions, regional fragmentation, market volatility, high levels of piracy and the high concentration of large entertainment groups, particularly in the music and cinema sectors. Furthermore, mass communications organizations hold relative monopolies, making it difficult for independent artists to get the exposure that they need to their audience increase, and diversify the market. Coordination at the regional level could help redress this imbalance through initiatives that promote upcoming artists, for example, through cinema, theatre or music festivals, or exchange programmes for young artists within the region. At a national level, reinforcing the social security system for artists – following the example of Costa Rica – would also vitalise the potential of the creative sector.

In the past few years, there has been an increase in the participation of the private sector in cultural performance that could be better harnessed. There is, however a large gap between the contributions of large and small businesses. There are fewer and fewer family businesses and more transnational organizations that contribute, in particular financial institutions and foundations. One positive example in Mexico, the *Mipymes Culturales* programme was established by the National Council for Culture and Arts to support micro, small and medium cultural enterprises that work to safeguard cultural heritage, particularly in the area of crafts. Another potential solution for promoting small businesses is the ‘clusters’ approach, which creates networks at the local level, such as Buenos Aires, a UNESCO Creative City for Design. In 2014, the Design District was opened in the Argentinian capital to concentrate the city’s design industry and services in a specific area, in line with SDG 11. However, as yet, there are few examples of this sort of ‘cluster’ initiative elsewhere in Latin America.

Colombia – through its ‘Orange Economy’ policy launched in 2017 – particularly stands out in the region as having the most comprehensive public policy strategy with creativity at its heart. The programme involves a major investment effort by the Colombian government with the aim of stimulating private sector investment in the cultural and creative industries ranging from arts, crafts, festivals, and heritage to music, publishing, and fashion. The results of this major programme show the sector’s value having increased from US\$ 6.2 billion in 2010 to US\$ 8.2 billion in 2017, with an annual average growth of 5.5% (WIPO, 2019). The programme expects these industries to further strengthen, not only in terms of job creation, but also with regards to innovation, diversification and sustainability by 2022.

## DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND NEW OPPORTUNITIES

The changing role of new technologies and media is also providing opportunities to promote Latin American culture and its products beyond the region. The region has had a certain amount of success in creating a niche for Latin American literature, cinema and music but this has not necessarily translated into economic sustainability. To fully realize this potential, policies will need to rethink how they harness digital technologies in supporting various elements of the value chain from creation to production, distribution and access. It is crucial to ensure that local artists, especially those from indigenous communities and the products of their traditional knowledge and creativity, continue to benefit from this increased market potential.

At a regional level, efforts have been made such as the Digital Cultural Agenda for Ibero-America, launched in 2014, as an integrated effort to promote the creation of quality content. This aims to expand upon initiatives like the Retina Latina video-on-demand platform established by Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay, which provides free access to Latin American films, or the International Image Festival – held in Manizales (Colombia) since 1997 to showcase digital creativity. A recent Mexican initiative to make an online literary library of Ibero-America is also gaining support. The 2023 Expo that is due to be held in Buenos Aires (Argentina), under the theme ‘Science, Innovation, Art and Creativity for Human Development’. ‘Creative Industries in Digital Convergence’, will also be an opportunity to bring regional and international actors together to discuss this theme.

**Argentinian legislation requires television to broadcast three hours of content for children a day, of which 50% must be domestically produced.**

Given the proliferation of information and communication technologies, as well as the increase in the importance of the cultural economy, it is necessary to improve and expand educational programmes (performing arts, audiovisual museum curation, photography, design and engineering), as well as broader skill sets related to management in the cultural sector. This would strengthen the creative sector, as well as provide opportunities for the estimated 20 million young people in Latin America who neither study nor work (World Bank, 2016) in line with SDG 8 (decent work) and 10 (reducing inequalities). Arts education at all levels of the school system would foster a greater sense of identity in each country, as well as for the region. Mexico in particular is also one of the main advocates of arts education at the international level.

# LOOKING AHEAD

The Latin America multi-layered history is highly valued through its policies that embody cultural diversity and cultural rights. The region's biodiversity, and the linkages with cultural diversity, are a great source of wealth. As such, the region offers valuable insights for harnessing culture for sustainable development notably the use of intangible cultural heritage for social inclusion and harnessing local knowledge systems – particularly indigenous knowledge. To differing degrees, countries of the sub-region are capitalising on this wealth of heritage and creativity for economic development and the promotion of a regional cultural identity, including in the digital sphere. More systematic data collection, an expansion in arts education and an ever-more enabling environment for civil society will allow culture to continue to flourish and contribute to sustainable development in the sub-region.

# HIGHLIGHTS

- The Caribbean is characterised by distinctive regional cultural expressions that have gained global recognition and that are inspired notably by the aspiration for emancipation.
  - Due to the sub-region's shared history of slavery and forced displacement of African, Indian and Chinese populations, culture has a fundamental place in Caribbean society due to its specific conceptualization.
    - Evolving from an early approach to cultural policies that focused on the conservation of often colonial heritage, large-scale cultural events, such as festivals, opened up new pathways to an approach that takes into account the economic aspect of culture, as well as its social function.
    - The strong regional dynamic provides great potential for innovative policy-making in culture.
    - Whilst the integration of culture into broader public policy remains limited, the 2030 Agenda provides opportunities for culture to reinforce its contribution to sustainable development, particularly in sectors such as cultural tourism and the creative economy.



Anguilla • Antigua and Barbuda • Aruba • Bahamas  
• Barbados • Belize • British Virgin Islands •  
Cayman Islands • Cuba • Curaçao • Dominica •  
Dominican Republic • Grenada • Guyana • Haiti  
• Jamaica • Montserrat • Saint Kitts and Nevis •  
Sint Maarten • Saint Lucia • Saint Vincent  
and the Grenadines • Suriname •  
Trinidad and Tobago





## CULTURE AS THE BEDROCK OF A UNIQUE REGIONAL CULTURAL IDENTITY

The Caribbean sub-region consists of several island and continental countries and territories, which are usually sub-divided into linguistic groups: English-speaking, French-speaking, Spanish-speaking and Dutch-speaking Caribbean. Most of these are members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), a sub-regional group composed mostly of English-speaking countries. In the field of culture, CARICOM serves as the main regional forum for the Caribbean region, inviting the participation of associate and non-members, such as Cuba and the Dominican Republic.



***Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery  
None but ourselves can free our mind  
(Redemption Song, 1979)  
These lyrics of Bob Marley capture the response  
of people of African descent to centuries of  
displacement, articulated as a new cultural  
philosophy at the centre of Caribbean identity.***

Whilst the different country groupings have inherited certain cultural traits (including language) from former colonial powers, they share a common history that is strongly marked by slavery, forced migration and predominantly coexistence of different ethnic groups (including African, Chinese and Indian) within plantation societies. This sense of shared history has remained strong in the post-independence era and throughout the related political and social changes, and is particularly expressed in the

aspiration for fundamental rights. The colonial legacy, with its resulting inequalities and social exclusion, have led to high levels of violence, in particular against women, and continue to leave large groups of young people vulnerable in both social and economic terms. Economically, the sub-region is heavily dependent on tourism, combined with an emerging important financial sector in parts of the region. The narrow economic market makes several countries vulnerable to shocks and major macroeconomic changes, which is further compounded by the fact that most of its countries are small island states, with limited options for economic diversification.

Following the end of colonial rule, culture became an important tool of emancipation for the majority of the population that had formerly been enslaved. This has given the sector a very particular place in Caribbean life and has resulted in unique forms of cultural expression, many of which have gained global influence, for example Reggae music of Jamaica (Reggae music was inscribed in 2018 on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity). Culture offered a platform to express anti-colonial sentiment, to foster the development of a local cultural identity and to communicate a worldview, that was strongly grounded in the African roots of much of the

**Barbadians, like the rest of the people of the Caribbean, have, for the past five hundred years, struggled to liberate themselves from a legacy of slavery and colonialism, a legacy which sought aggressively to create among them a sense of powerlessness and a lack of confidence in who they were. In essence, the entire value system of the enslaved people was declared unworthy of preservation and summarily discarded. Even after five hundred years this powerlessness can still be seen.**  
*Extract from the National Cultural Policy of Barbados (2010)*

Caribbean population. This cultural emancipation was intrinsically linked with a sense of self-determination that aimed to address a widespread need to come to terms with the past and reaffirm newly obtained rights and freedoms. Politics, history and culture thereby became strongly intertwined through slogans like ‘equal rights and justice’, which became part of the Jamaican Rastafari culture. Creole languages that had been developed by the enslaved gained recognition in the post-independence era, becoming one of the key pillars of identity building. Haitian Creole, for example, became recognized as the official language of Haiti, together with French. The historical basis of Caribbean culture continues to inspire cultural policies, as reflected in the 2010 National Cultural Policy of Barbados, which seeks to redress the legacy of powerlessness’.



## HISTORY OF SLAVERY AND COLONIALISM DEFINING EARLY CULTURAL POLICIES

Given the prominent role of the culture sector during the immediate post-independence period in the Caribbean, cultural policies have a long history in the sub-region. Among the earliest institutions established by post-independence governments were those whose mandate was the conservation embodies of cultural heritage, even though much of this heritage preserves a colonial past and support for its preservation continues to be ambivalent. This particular focus in the Caribbean can also be seen in the ratification of UNESCO Culture Conventions, with almost universal ratification of both the World Heritage Convention (1972) and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003). Indeed, the emergence of cultural policies was strongly influenced by international endeavours, for example, UNESCO’s organization of Mondiacult in 1982.

Cultural policies have also been greatly influenced at the sub-regional level. The shared sense of sub-regional cultural identity has been used as a platform for regional integration through organizations like CARICOM, whose Ministers of Culture meet regularly in the Council on Human and Social Development. CARICOM gathers data and produces reports on the Caribbean culture sector and drives the organization of regional cultural events, the most well-known being the Caribbean Festival of the Arts (CARIFESTA), which has been running since 1994. These sub-regional efforts have led to the mainstreaming of cultural policies across the sub-region, fostering exchange through culture, as well as a better positioning of culture to tackle key development challenges on a regional scale. The first sub-regional cultural policy was adopted in 1995 by CARICOM countries, focusing primarily on culture’s role in development in the broadest sense. Cultural identity became the single most important factor in the movement for regional integration, and the arts a vehicle for creating a new aesthetic and providing the community with a fresh narrative.

**Culture is not only the fruit but the root of development and must be considered in every phase and aspect of the development process.**

**Extract from Regional Cultural Policy of the Caribbean Community (1994)**

This sub-regional policy had repercussions at the national level, where the shaping of a shared identity was incorporated into cultural policies. The conservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage continues to be a high priority for several countries, as evidenced by the titles of their national strategies, for example in the Cayman Islands National Culture and Heritage Policy and Strategic Plan (2017), or by recent legislation such as the National Cultural Preservation Act in Belize (2017). These policies are often reflections of a historic narrative that seeks to redress past wrongs: a reconstruction of identities combined with the need to promote more positive sentiments among the people about the land they inhabit. For example, the national policy of Saint Lucia positions itself in a context of racial consciousness and self-determination. While this reflects the emancipation of the culture sector in the sub-region – and the essential role it has played, historically and socially – the approach can also be limiting, and risks ignoring a number of other needs of the culture sector, as well as potential areas for development.



## A GRADUAL POLICY SHIFT TOWARDS INCORPORATING THE ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF CULTURE

By the late 1960s, there was already a growing recognition that culture was not only a vehicle for defining the identity of a people but also for economic development. Carnivals and festivals across the Caribbean, including in Haiti, Cuba and the Dominican Republic, evolved beyond being local cultural events and developed a regional – and sometimes global – popularity that required more professional management and marketing. In Jamaica, as Reggae Sunsplash and other music festivals grew in international popularity, artists began to earn money from their crafts and an industry began to develop. Such economic considerations began to trigger a shift in cultural policy, starting in the late 1990s. The impact was felt particularly strongly in the tourism sector, as it stimulated the development of accommodation and other hospitality businesses that needed to cater to the increased number of festival-goers, thus increasing local socio-economic development through the tourism value chain.

Despite this gradual shift in cultural policies – and despite the sector having been widely recognized as having an important comparative advantage for growth and economic diversification – in many places the economic aspect of culture remains largely underexplored. This is in part linked to the sector's history and strong ties with political activism, which has created a certain tension between cultural value and economic value. The growing commercialization of art in the sub-region is often seen as moving culture away from its essence: the promotion of happiness, inclusion, self-confidence and a collective sense of achievement. Hence, public investment remains

**Over the years our formal processes have emphasized our European past far more than our African, Indian, Chinese and other heritage. Indeed, in the area of tangible heritage, we have paid greater tributes to the great houses than to the so-called slave barracks, to the architecture and purpose of forts and castles than to the free villages associated with our people's quest for survival. Even now we engage official religions and relegate African religious manifestations to ignorance and taboo.**  
*Extract from the National Cultural Policy of Jamaica (2003)*

low. Caribbean governments are still more likely to fund the financial sector or the construction sector, even where cultural products have demonstrated higher returns. Financing the creative sector through the private sector also remains challenging: loans are difficult to obtain because the sector is not considered to be economically viable, a view that is often exacerbated due to a lack of data.

At the same time, a 2006 sub-regional study, *The Cultural Industries in CARICOM: Trade and Development Challenges* concluded that increased investment in culture would benefit the regional economies and would be a strategic resource for sustainable development. Following the study, a regional strategy was developed that addressed a number of core issues like data collection, mobility of artists and the economic viability of the culture sector. The CARICOM Strategic Plan for the Caribbean Community 2015–2019 reaffirmed culture as central to building social and economic resilience, aiming to give fresh impetus to the sector's economic role and its potential to contribute to some of the sub-region's development challenges.

The recognition of the important role that culture can play has led to concrete policies at the sub-regional level. The EU-CARIFORUM Economic Partnership Agreement, which includes culture as one of the sectors of the trade agreement, is the most high-level of such endeavours. The mobility of artists is another specific challenge that has been addressed at the sub-regional level. Caribbean artists earn more money by performing than through the sales of CDs or DVDs, for example, whilst other sectors like literature, arts and crafts find an important market in various fairs and exhibitions organized throughout the sub-region and globally. Since travel in

the region can be very complex, especially in terms of visa allowances, CARICOM has created the Caribbean Single Market and Economy within which the free movement of artists and cultural workers is promoted. Though implementation remains difficult, such sub-regional undertakings are essential stepping stones in fostering the economic role of the creative sector in the region.

However, at the national level, implementing change remains a challenge: the culture sector, broadly speaking, continues to rely heavily on subsidies and grants but remains under-capacitated and under-funded. That said, there are promising initiatives throughout the sub-region in the form of fiscal incentives for cultural and creative industries and the establishment of new institutions that provide services to the creative sector. For example, the Bahamas offers incentives through tax breaks; Jamaica has introduced an import duty waiver for musical instruments and equipment; and Trinidad and Tobago offer fiscal incentives for companies investing in culture. Although progress remains relatively slow, these practical efforts are also increasingly reflected at a policy level, for example in Jamaica's National Policy on Culture and Creative Economy (due to be released). Tourism-based policies are also important in this regard to ensure that tourism resources are ploughed back into culture and heritage through tourism taxes, for example.



***It is widely accepted that the Caribbean punches above its weight in the creative economy given the international success of many of the Caribbean's musical genres, recording artists, literary authors and festivals. However, it is surprising, if not alarming, to observe the region's poor trade performance in the creative sector. This is in a context where the creative sector is arguably an area in which CARIFORUM countries enjoy some competitive advantage and for which there is much scope for product and export diversification and for destination and intellectual property branding.***  
Nurse and Nicholls (2011)



## 2030 AGENDA: A NEW DYNAMIC FOR CULTURE AND DEVELOPMENT

The endorsement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has set in motion a new, intersectoral dynamic for cultural policies, resulting in Caribbean countries recognizing culture's essential role for broader sustainable development. This promotes a deepening of the transversal alignment between culture and development. Historically, linkages were rarely made between culture and broader public policy issues, and ministries of culture rarely cooperated with other ministries, with the exception of Cuba where the culture sector has long been better integrated within a broader governance system. More recently, Jamaica's Vision 2030 is among the clearest articulations of culture being a key pillar of broader development (even if the policy pre-dates the adoption of the 2030 Agenda).

Even when not explicitly mentioned in national development plans, culture is increasingly recognized as contributing to other development fields that are essential in the Caribbean context. Faced with high levels of poverty, culture – and the cultural and creative industries, in particular – is considered essential for the elimination of poverty (SDG 1), which has become a new development imperative in the sub-region. The creative sector in the Caribbean

directly engages large numbers of young people, especially through music. This is a resource that has yet to be fully tapped, both in terms of social cohesion, as well as in economic terms. Based on World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) data, the contribution of the copyright industries to GDP in Caribbean countries, such as Saint Lucia and Saint Kitts and Nevis, are above the global average (5%), with rates of 8% and 6.6%, respectively (WIPO, 2012). Yet, they are below the average in terms of the levels of employment within the copyright industries in employment.

However, as noted in the Regional

Development Strategy and Action Plan for the Cultural Industries in CARICOM (2015), it is difficult to get a full and accurate picture, as much of the data related to the sector is incomplete and those that exist are often linked to sectors other than the cultural and creative sector. For example, data on the contribution of festivals and events to the economy are listed under tourism and not the cultural and creative sector.

Another major impediment to culture as an enabler for sustainable development to address challenges such as to tackle poverty within countries is the limited integration of culture within education at all levels – from pre-primary to tertiary. The transfer of the region's unique cultural expressions, which are globally admired, continues to take place through non-formal education system, which limits the sector's growth potential. The exception to this



***Vision 2030 Jamaica introduces a new paradigm which redefines the strategic direction for Jamaica and puts us on a different path – a path that will lead to sustainable prosperity. The new paradigm will move from dependence on the lower forms of capital – our sun and sand tourism and exporting sub-soil assets and basic agricultural commodities, to development of the country's higher forms of capital – our cultural, human, knowledge and institutional capital stocks that will move us into higher stages of development. Extract from the Vision 2030 Jamaica – National Development Plan (2009)***

trend is Cuba, which boasts numerous schools for the arts and culture, resulting in a highly professional creative sector. In other places, the absence of formal linkages with education is partially compensated by training through cultural festivals, which, for example organize competitions for young artists. Examples of such festivals include the Barbados National Independence Festival of the Creative Arts and Jamaica's National Festival of the Arts. However, greater professionalization and innovation in the sector calls for increased linkages with education and for the establishment of professional standards.

## URBANIZATION, GENDER EQUALITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

Where culture is not embedded into broad sustainable development plans, it is sometimes alluded to in relation to specific Sustainable Development Goals. According to a recent survey, approximately half of the countries in the sub-region have integrated culture into their national development plans on sustainable cities (SDG 11) (UNESCO, 2019). Rural-urban migration has increasingly become an issue in the Caribbean, with urban centres growing rapidly, often with high levels of poverty, especially in the large informal settlements. As a result, some struggle to cater to a rapidly expanding and increasingly diverse population, often in search of employment or education opportunities. The culture sector offers various ways to address these issues, including fostering more sustainable, diverse societies and offering opportunities for income generation or through the creative sector, as exemplified by the three Caribbean members of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. Festivals offer another way for the culture sector to help boost city life and transform urban space, such as in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, which hosted CARIFESTA in 2015.

**In 2015, when the annual edition of CARIFESTA was organized in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, the event brought spectators and artists from all over the region to the city. Not only was it an opportunity for cultural exchange, it was also used as an occasion to push for the renovation of cultural venues throughout the country that had been badly affected by the 2010 earthquake, and whose cultural vibrancy was still struggling to recover.**

Historic urban centres are also under huge pressure, and competing priorities and needs often leave these areas in a poor state of conservation. Acknowledging the need to better protect these historic areas within a sustainable development approach, Suriname launched the Paramaribo Urban Rehabilitation Programme to revitalize this World Heritage site and Grenada established a conservation zone for the historic part of its capital, St. George. More broadly, preservation of historic urban centres and other heritage sites can be a platform for expanding cultural tourism in the area, as well as for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

Cultural tourism has great potential to diversify its products and services to tourists through different types of accommodation, gastronomy and experiences, in contrast to the mass tourism development model. For example, the Dominican Republic completed a large-scale revitalization project of the Colonial City of Santo Domingo – a World Heritage property – that also focused on bringing creative businesses to the area, together with a public art and meeting space.

The Caribbean is highly exposed to natural hazards, in particular hurricanes, as well as related secondary hazards like floods and landslides. In addition, the small island nations and coastal areas are particularly vulnerable to the effects of rising sea levels due to climate change. Despite the high risk of disaster, culture is rarely incorporated into disaster risk reduction policies, neither as a sector to protect nor as a source for mitigation. Furthermore, linkages are not always explicit between cultural diversity and the sub-region's biodiversity, even if there are some examples of cultural policies that recognize the links with the environment, such as the Culture in Education and Environment in the Belize National Cultural Policy (2016-2026), which 'support(s) initiatives promoting practices geared at sustainable livelihood and protection of the environment'. In other areas, like gender or health and HIV/AIDS, the linkages with culture also remain limited, even though the sectors could benefit from closer connections. Traditional gender roles, for example, remain strong in the region notably because of the legacy of inequalities rooted in plantation societies, and advancing gender equality is a key challenge. Some Caribbean cultural expressions, in particular music, perpetuate these stereotyped gender roles, for example by objectifying women. Considering the wide outreach of the sector, in particular towards a young public, it is thus essential to work with artists and culture sector professionals to improve the current situation, in line with SDG 10 (on reducing inequalities).



***A nation's culture is its lifestyle and influences the way in which it assesses itself. Culture provides the framework within which the nation identifies its priorities and goals. It is the vehicle by which greater national cohesion may be achieved, greater national discipline inculcated, and greater self-awareness and self-reliance inspired.***  
***A.J. Seymour (1914-1989), poet (Guyana)***

However, it is encouraging that almost half of the countries have integrated culture into policies related to SDG 16, target 7: 'Ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels'. Currently, private entities that operate cultural institutions such as museums and galleries, for example, tend to operate in isolation from the government, which complicates efforts to consolidate the various strengths of the sector. Furthermore, civil society involvement in the culture sector is also strong but often mistrusted by governments. Enhancing cooperation between governments and non-state actors would greatly strengthen cultural policies. Finally, a more inclusive and participatory approach at the grassroots level would also capitalise on a growing interest in cultural diversity, which is considered to be the 'new frontier of cultural policies'. This approach offers opportunities to link the post-slavery roots of Caribbean culture with identity, indigenous communities and growing diversity within the population.

# LOOKING AHEAD

The unique Caribbean perception of culture that is so intertwined with identity has given rise to a particularly vibrant culture sector. The sub-region's long history of cultural policies is a solid base, on which cultural policies may be expanded, including at the regional level – through CARICOM – to design innovative approaches, such as supporting the mobility of artists. It is broadly recognised that the Caribbean region 'punches above its weight' in terms of the production of cultural expressions. However, it has yet to fully translate this cultural vibrancy into economic vibrancy, especially for young people. In view of the tourism potential in the region, further linking culture and tourism policies is also essential. Whilst some countries have already taken advantage of the powerful role of culture in broader public policy, others may wish to seize the opportunity to harness this power in areas of policy-making from social inclusion and gender equality to disaster risk reduction, health and urban policy.

# HIGHLIGHTS

- With its wealth of cultural diversity, Asia has a distinctive conception of culture that highly values the intrinsic linkages between tangible and intangible cultural heritage and that views culture as a collective good – a conception that has strongly contributed to shaping international debates to expand the scope of culture.
  - The role of culture for nation building and social cohesion is broadly recognised in the region, particularly in the context of increased conflicts and growing inequalities.
    - The economic dimension of culture is increasingly recognised; certain countries feature among the main exporters of cultural goods and services, whilst others prioritise cultural industries that draw on collective traditional know-how, notably crafts.
    - Culture features in national plans in line with the 2030 Agenda, in particular to address the challenges of rapid urbanization and mass tourism – that have a large impact on cultural heritage – although the cultural dimension of disaster risk reduction and climate change remains underexplored.
  - Even though there are great disparities in cultural policies, there are growing regional aspirations to strengthen cooperation through the initiatives of organizations, as well as through cultural diplomacy, particularly cultural routes.



Afghanistan • Bangladesh • Bhutan • Brunei Darussalam •  
Cambodia • China • Democratic People's Republic of Korea  
• India • Indonesia • Iran (Islamic Republic of) • Japan •  
Lao People's Democratic Republic • Macao, China  
• Malaysia • Maldives • Mongolia • Myanmar • Nepal •  
Pakistan • Philippines • Republic of Korea  
• Singapore • Sri Lanka • Thailand  
• Timor-Leste • Viet Nam





## A DIVERSITY OF CULTURAL POLICIES

The Asia region is very diverse in terms of levels of social and economic development, geography and population size. It is home to the world's most populous countries – 1.42 billion people in China and 1.35 billion in India – and to some of the smallest – 807,000 people in Bhutan and 436,000 in the Maldives (World Bank, 2018). Certain major economies – like China, India and Japan – are at the centre of global economy, whereas others continue to feature among the world's least developed countries – Afghanistan, Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Nepal, and Timor-Leste. Economic growth, urbanization, rural-urban migration and a rapidly growing population are putting considerable pressures on culture, heritage and societies. While many countries have enjoyed peaceful environments, supporting rapid economic growth and increased tourism, others face ongoing tensions, armed conflict or the aftermath of war and disasters.

The socio-economic dimension may be viewed as one of the main parameters defining Asia's approach to cultural policies, although not exclusively. Indeed, the socio-economic context to a large extent shapes the culture sector's dependence on government initiatives and budget, the professional capacities of those working in the sector, the role of civil society, as well as the domestic market for cultural goods and services. Countries that are experiencing an increase in terms of social and economic development tend to give more priority to culture, even though there are exceptions such as Lao People's Democratic Republic, which invests considerably in culture despite featuring among the world's least developed countries.

This diversity of development contexts and priorities is a challenge for the development and application of overall regional policy models in Asia. To address this, various sub-regional forums – for example the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) – foster cooperation between countries and have adopted cultural policies. Such policies include, for example, the ASEAN Strategic Plan for Culture and Arts 2016-2025, which focuses on cultural linkages and dialogue. In addition, an increasing number of cultural networks, regional organizations – such as the Asian Cultural Council – and centres of expertise – including various UNESCO centres – are stimulating transnational and regional cooperation. Their efforts have contributed to the development of a more coherent approach to culture across the region.



## POLICY CHALLENGES

The near universal ratification of the UNESCO Convention for the Prevention of Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property (1970), the World Heritage Convention (1972) and the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention (2003) exemplify Asia's strong commitment to culture, and such international standards influence national approaches. All countries have developed cultural policies and established dedicated public institutions for culture, although they vary widely in scope and capacities. However, a considerable gap often remains between the adherence to international standards and their implementation, as detailed

planning is often lacking. This may be partly due to cultural authorities remaining among the least prioritized in terms of staff and budget. Overall, capacities in the sector are very uneven, and increasingly ill-adapted to emerging needs within the cultural field. Institutions are often staffed with highly specialised expertise, whilst less attention is paid to the broader skills set required to manage whole policies and programmes. This exacerbates the difficulties of better integrating culture with broader public policy and compounds the problem of silo-approaches within the sector. The development of a skills and qualification framework for the culture sector as a whole, similar to the one that is being developed for heritage in the region, could help to better define expertise needed, notably to encompass a broader vision of the contribution of culture to sustainable development.

The development, implementation and assessment of cultural policies is, furthermore, hindered by a lack of statistics and policy research, which tend to be only available in the region's more mature economies. While countries like Indonesia and Thailand have produced cultural data – including on culture's contribution to other development areas – and Cambodia and Viet Nam participated in the UNESCO Culture for Development Indicators (CDIS) project, reliable and up-to-date information is usually lacking. Capacities for data collection and analysis are insufficient across most of the region. An additional challenge is posed by the volume of non-formal cultural activities, which requires adapted models for data collection.

## 2030 AGENDA PARADIGM SHIFTS IN ASIAN CULTURAL POLICIES

Whereas international models, including UNESCO Conventions, remain the primary basis for the development and implementation of cultural policies, a recent research trend in academia in the region advocates for a more 'Asian' approach, arguing that the concepts applied elsewhere in the world, notably in Europe, are sometimes inadequate when applied to governance systems influenced by Asian thought and tradition. As such, a regional approach to national policies can be seen in their valuing of collective rights, rather than individual rights, with very strong community engagement and cultural ownership. For example, across Asian cultural policies there is rarely a strong focus on artistic independence, or the intrinsic value of art. Cultural heritage is widely considered in terms of a community's collective right to use and market the art, crafts and other cultural expressions based on traditional heritage.

Furthermore, the conception of culture throughout the region considers the different dimensions of culture – tangible and intangible, moveable and immovable – as inherently linked. Whereas initially, policies at a global level were centred around built heritage, with an emphasis on identification, documentation and preservation, the strong interdependence of various forms of heritage has

**In Asia, culture is often viewed in terms of a community's collective right to use and market the art, crafts and other cultural expressions based on the traditional heritage. This is one of the reasons for the importance accorded to crafts as a key cultural expression in Asian cultural policies.**

always been present in the Asian approach. For example, heritage sites have long been considered as places of memory, where the tangible and the intangible come together, such as at the Liberation War Museum in Bangladesh and the Youth for Peace (Krain Ta Chan) project in Cambodia. This approach to cultural policies has formed gradually, with the region increasingly voicing its views in the international arena, for example, enriching international debates on the concept of authenticity as applied to cultural heritage, the notion of cultural diversity and recent debates on ‘cultural advancement’.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has also triggered a paradigm shift in cultural policies in the region. Following the inclusion of culture in various targets and indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), culture now features increasingly in national development plans. For example, in Bangladesh and Indonesia, specific targets and indicators have been developed in relation to culture and the SDGs, and in Lao People’s Democratic Republic, culture has been integrated into the most recent five-year national development plan. When not linked to broad sustainable development aims, culture is often linked to one or more specific development sectors, mostly to SDG 11 (on sustainable cities and communities) and SDG 16 (on promoting peaceful and inclusive societies).

**More and more countries are integrating cultural policies into national development plans, thereby acknowledging that culture is no longer the affair of the ministries of culture alone.**

In many countries in the region, culture is no longer considered the sole responsibility of the cultural authorities. Increasingly private sector involvement in culture sector activities has resulted in fundamental changes to existing cultural governance modalities. At the same time, public policies remain essential and there is a

general feeling that, due to their inherent value, culture and cultural heritage are too important to be left to market interests alone. Civil society organizations (CSOs) also play an active role in the safeguarding and revitalization of cultural heritage – both tangible and intangible. In recent decades, CSOs have rapidly expanded their scope to cover many issues, like gender, education, social welfare, as well as culture, with a significant impact on relations between the State and citizens, on public institutions, and on prevailing norms and values. Yet governments across the region remain ambivalent about CSO involvement, which in some countries has even led to tighter regulations and closer government scrutiny.

**POLICY FOCUS: HERITAGE AND THE CREATIVE ECONOMY**

Cultural policies in Asia tend to fall into two main categories: i) policies for the public management of cultural resources and institutions, and ii) policies regulating cultural and creative industries. They are not necessarily mutually exclusive, however, as illustrated by policies of China and the Republic of Korea. The public management of cultural resources remains the largest policy area.

At the core is the safeguarding of heritage, including through the establishment and management of dedicated institutions. For example, in Myanmar, the recently updated legal framework for the culture sector focuses on moveable heritage, monuments and heritage regions – areas comprised of monuments and sites. Such policies are strongly influenced by international conventions, which sometimes limits transversal policy-making across culture realms.

The second focus area involves cultural and creative industries and, as such, includes more apparent links with other development sectors. The region accounts for 43% of jobs in the creative economy worldwide, with visual arts, books and music industries as the main employers (EY, 2015). The sector tends to emphasize the importance of traditional culture – especially as regards heritage, and traditional skills and knowledge – as the source of social and economic development, as distinguished from the European context, for example, which tends to emphasize innovation and individual expression as the creative industries' main asset. These policies on cultural and creative industries can be further subdivided into two groups, aligned with the development levels of the countries concerned: either the fast-paced creative industries



***As the purpose of cultural policy is to attain sustainable development and well-being for all, the process of policy-making has to be naturally bottom-up to reflect the needs of people. We need to develop mechanisms to empower artists, cultural professionals, and communities at large to participate in the policy-making process, as well as to monitor the effectiveness of public policies.***

***Resolution of the International Forum for the Advancement of Culture, Jakarta, Indonesia, October (2019)***

in East Asia or the cultural industries more closely linked to traditional cultural production, such as crafts and performing arts, often found in more rural environments in the region.

In the countries with fully-fledged creative industries, policies are applied in a context of rapid economic, technological and industrial development, and with a focus on young highly-educated creative individuals with specialized skills. These innovative entrepreneurs draw on a wide range of heritage traditions that they mix to develop new products that are globally appealing. Within the region, China currently dominates in the global export of creative goods but India and Singapore also figure among the

world's top ten exporters. Copyright-based industries in Japan, China, Malaysia, Philippines and the Republic of Korea also contribute more than the global average (5.22%) to GDP, and their rise has led to a growing appreciation of the creative economy (World Intellectual Property Organization, 2019).

The second policies for the creative economy relies more on traditional knowledge. Such policies focus on communities or groups and on their collective rights. As is the case for most crafts, skilled workers tend to grow up in a specific tradition, often passed down from generation to generation. Policies for cultural industries have gradually transformed this sector – which used to be largely informal – to a more solid structure and thereby created new work opportunities, as exemplified by the large number of artisan-based entrepreneurship programmes in the region, in line with SDG 8 (on decent work and economic growth). These crafts industries are used as a vector to generate employment opportunities and to curb rural-urban migration, as well preserve heritage. In some cases, they are also applied as a model in more developed economies for the promotion of uniquely local products. Asia's positive experience of fostering crafts for development illustrates the importance the region attaches to crafts as a subsector, whose economic and cultural dimensions are considered within the region to be insufficiently recognized at a global level, including through international conventions.



**Asia's cultural and creative industries account for 43% of jobs in the creative economy worldwide, with visual arts, books and music industries as the main employers.**

International cooperation and cultural diplomacy are also strong priorities across the region and seen as an instrument of soft power. For example, the on-going project in the region for the serial transnational World Heritage nomination process for the silk roads is involving an increasing number of

countries. Initiated by five Central Asian Countries and China, the project now includes sixteen countries (Afghanistan, China, India, Iran, Japan, Nepal, Pakistan, and the Republic of Korea, in addition to the five Central Asian countries, Azerbaijan, Russian Federation and Turkey, with Bhutan as an observer) and it aims to increase regional cooperation and capacities, while also focusing on the preservation of heritage and the promotion of tourism and creative industries. As a large transnational culture initiative, the Silk Roads project reflects the importance of culture and heritage as part of foreign policy.



**TECHNOLOGICAL  
ADVANCEMENT AND THE  
NEED FOR NEW SKILLS**

Asia is a global leader in terms of digital and technological advancement, which greatly impacts the culture sector, as they have led to significant changes in production and consumption of cultural goods and services. Currently, new challenges posed by technological developments are rarely reflected in cultural policies. Few countries have a comprehensive digital cultural policy, notably due to the rise of user-generated digital content, which is challenging the monopoly authorities that many Asian countries have over media, information and entertainment.

Economies like China, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Singapore lead the creative economy, by harnessing contemporary technologies and incorporating them into policies that prioritize creative industry development. The rapid spread of popular culture from Japan and the Republic of Korea – including music, film, animation, fashion magazines and video games – has changed patterns of cultural consumption. To a certain extent, technological developments – for example, access to mobile phones, social media and digital platforms – has also invigorated more traditional sectors like crafts, literature, performing arts and heritage. At the same time, there is concern about the loss of traditional cultural values and knowledge resulting from the free trade of cultural goods and services, and the increasing influence of some of the stronger regional players in the market economy, with many artisans forced to abandon their traditional occupations, therefore threatening the viability of living heritage. Enhanced policies could bridge the gap between the requirements of adapting to a market economy and the insufficient investment in skills development.

## CULTURAL POLICIES FOR DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

In light of Asia's diversity, culture is seen as a factor that can unite – by fostering national identities – as much as it may divide – by promoting specific ethnic identities, to the neglect of others. Interesting experiences exist in the region, albeit insufficiently systematized, that contribute to ensuring that cultural policies are representative of the diversity of all segments of Asia's evolving societies. Japan, for example, is increasing the involvement of communities in the decision-making process of cultural policies, so that these policies better reflect diverse views. Asian countries have also made a great effort through their policies to address the rights of people living with disabilities to access and participate in cultural life.

Fostering cultural rights requires the inclusion of women, minorities, vulnerable groups and indigenous communities. Whereas overall cultural policies in the region try to improve overall access and social development, inequalities – particularly gender inequality – remain deeply entrenched in Asia. In many cases, women, youth, and minorities are designated as priority groups in cultural policies, for example, in Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, Myanmar and the Philippines. However, public cultural programmes rarely target the empowerment of women and other excluded groups as a direct objective, leaving the impact of such overarching policy objectives relatively limited. The skills and knowledge of indigenous groups remain under-recognized in much of the region and some cultural policies relating to them risk, in more or less direct ways, further marginalizing these communities whose traditions and ways of life are frequently under pressure.

**Reclaiming our past is a critical gateway to shaping our future [...] Diversity is, therefore, an immense social and cultural resource that must be embraced as a unifying bond. This diversity is reflected in each and every aspect in the country [...] A conscious effort is required to bring to the fore not just the presence and beauty of this variety but also what each symbolically represents. The need to celebrate culture is not an impulse to fossilize it and reject its evolution. Pakistani culture must remain vibrant [...] with globally endorsed principles of human rights, tolerance and social justice that fulfil people's emerging aspirations.**

*Extract from the National Film and Cultural Policy of Pakistan (2018)*

The interest in promoting diversity and pluralism is tempered by a tendency to frame culture through policies as reflected in the area of artistic freedom. Many policies tend to reflect this trend between preserving cultural tradition and promoting diversity, which reflects the struggle to balance tradition and globalization. Nevertheless, some countries in the region also consider their rich cultural and ethnic diversity to be an asset for social cohesion. Pakistan's 2018 cultural policy, for example, explicitly recognizes cultural diversity as a resource 'that must be embraced as a unifying bond'. In its most explicit form, difficulties in recognizing the potential of cultural diversity as an asset to the development of the society can be linked to an increasing number of ethnic conflicts in the region that not only stems from certain groups' struggle to access power and resources. This potential for conflict is also exacerbated by the challenges of dealing with rapid change and a fear of losing their identity and connections with culture and tradition due to, for example, rapid urban growth and migration from rural settings. This risk is recognized within the region, and several policies try to emphasize the importance of culture for nation building and fostering cultural knowledge and diversity to guarantee pluralistic societies and social cohesion.



## THE 2030 AGENDA TO ADDRESS CORE CHALLENGES

With the aim of meeting the needs of its large, and growing, urban population, many Asian policies and programmes focus on heritage, as well as creativity, as tools for urban regeneration. Many of these policies have emerged at the local level. For example, the UNESCO Creative Cities programme, which promotes exchange among cities around the world on the basis of culture and creativity, counts approximately 20% of its members in Asia (making it the second largest region after Europe). India has also developed a programme for urban cultural heritage that covers more than half of the Indian cities with over 1 million inhabitants, as well as in its smaller towns, in which numerous heritage sites have been recognized for protection. Overall, the culture sector in Asia aims to make cities more sustainable and liveable – in line with SDG 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities, as well as to stem the flow of rural-urban migration, for example, by creating economic opportunities for rural areas.

**Asia is home to 54% of the world's urban population with major urban agglomerations like Beijing, Delhi, Jakarta, Karachi, Manila, Mumbai, Osaka, Seoul and Shanghai reaching over twenty million inhabitants each. Urban migration is a dominant socio-economic trend in many Asian countries that also has an impact on cultural policies.**

UN DESA (2018)

Mass cultural tourism has taken off in Asia on an unprecedented scale, offering profits and job creation, in line with SDG 8, but also generating numerous disadvantages for local communities that can be addressed through cross-sectoral policies and regulations, including by taking the cultural dimension. The regional tendency to equate cultural tourism with tangible heritage is not only reductionist but has also led to increased pressure on heritage sites. Some governments have tried to address this, for example, in Angkor (Cambodia), the government has tried to diversify what is on offer for tourists by encouraging visits to other

sites. It is also increasing the number of alternative offers that look beyond the World Heritage sites towards natural settings, as well as to the cultural expressions offered by the creative industries or intangible practices.

Finally, despite the region's vulnerability to disasters due to natural hazards and increasing recognition of the challenges these pose for the culture sector, cultural policies have yet to focus on matters of disaster risk reduction or addressing the effects of climate change. The same applies to conflict and its effects on culture and heritage. Whereas the UNESCO Hague Convention (1954) has been ratified by the majority of countries in the region, issues directly related to conflict, reconciliation or peacebuilding are rarely alluded to in cultural policies. In this regard, intangible cultural heritage offers some opportunities, both to address conflict-related matters and to move towards programming across diverse cultural realms.

# LOOKING AHEAD

The socio-economic and cultural diversity of Asia is reflected in the variety of cultural policy approaches found in the region. The particularity of the Asian conception of culture – with a greater focus on collective rights – could be better harnessed to foster greater social inclusion, as well as generate jobs. The intertwining of tangible and intangible heritage across the region provides a solid basis for more sustainable safeguarding of heritage practices, including for the management of cultural tourism. Whilst increasingly Asian states are incorporating culture into their national development plans, these plans could be further reinforced by expanding the inclusion of culture in policies related to urbanisation, as well as paying greater attention to the cultural dimension in policies related to disaster risk reduction and conflict mitigation. A broader base of skills to link culture with public policy, as well as capacity-building for data are required, as is the need to strengthen partnerships with non-state actors.

# HIGHLIGHTS

- Culture is integrated into almost every aspect of daily life in the Pacific, with the close linkages between people and their environment shaping a uniquely Pacific way of life on the multiple islands that are relatively geographically isolated.
  - The wealth of traditional knowledge and skills is a source for developing more sustainable and resilient communities but the safeguarding of this intangible cultural heritage is under threat due the effects of climate change and the high levels of youth migration.
  - A strong regional dynamic has compensated for the lack of national cultural policies and has ensured that culture is embedded in broader public policy.
  - The sub-region has been a pioneer in terms of integrating cultural heritage and traditional knowledge into public policy to reduce the risks of natural hazards and in post-disaster evaluation, generating a dynamic in other countries.
  - The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides an opportunity to protect the sub-region's outstanding marine heritage, broaden the cultural dimension of tourism to stimulate sustainable models and better harness indigenous knowledge.



Australia • Cook Islands • Fiji • Kiribati • Marshall Islands  
• Micronesia (Federated States of) • Nauru •  
New Caledonia • New Zealand • Niue • Palau  
• Papua New Guinea • Samoa • Solomon Islands  
• Tokelau • Tonga • Tuvalu • Vanuatu •





## PACIFIC CULTURE: CONNECTING PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

The specific nature of the Pacific islands has created a very particular cultural tradition that is strongly intertwined with a distinctly Pacific way of life, despite the wide variety of geographies, sizes, and histories, culture, economies and political systems among the individual states. The sub-region is comprised of 16 small island states – which are home to some 10 million people (Pacific Community (SPC), 2019) – in addition to Australia and New Zealand. Some countries consist of atolls that cover very large areas, and the geographic isolation and the large distances between islands pose specific level of development and governance challenges. The level of development of the Pacific states varies widely, with an average of one in every four people living in poverty in the Pacific sub-region.

The islands' geographic position, limited access to resources and technological challenges restrict the expansion and potential of their local economies, making many states dependent on development assistance and overseas remittances. This makes islands vulnerable, leading in some cases to political instability and civil unrest. Above all, the ecologically fragile sub-region is facing some of the most urgent challenges of climate change in the world including a large population, loss of natural resources and environmental degradation. The Pacific is home to a relatively young population that faces high levels of unemployment – in the world including a large population of the unemployed are youth leading to increasing numbers of young people leaving the islands for Australia and New Zealand or other regions (Pacific Community (SPC), 2019).

Therefore, the need to preserve culture in all its dimensions and transmit this heritage to future generations is urgent, and is a major challenge in terms of sustainable development in the Pacific. Aside from the small island states, the Pacific is also home to Australia and New Zealand, which differ significantly from the rest of the region due to their size and development status, as well as in terms of the challenges they face. Moreover, both countries are important donors whose development aid programmes support other Pacific states, and whose impact on policies therefore have a reach beyond their national scope.

Cultural heritage in the Pacific is characterised by strong interlinkages between people and nature which is mainly expressed through intangible cultural heritage, including traditional knowledge, oral cultural traditions, performing arts, rituals, festive events, and knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe. Built heritage is often vernacular architecture (characterised by the use of local materials and knowledge) that works in harmony with nature, and many heritage sites demonstrate the coexistence of people with their natural environment. This type of heritage is fragile, relying on inter-

**Culture includes 'the dances, songs, chants, performances and handicrafts that most people are familiar with and that are celebrated at the four-yearly Festival of Pacific Arts. But culture is much more than that; it is about a way and quality of life, and it is about identity, rights, differences and tolerance, sustainable and healthy livelihoods, individual and community creativity and growth and, most importantly, about the future. Culture is also a sector, like agriculture or fisheries or tourism that is definable and requires public and private investment.'**

*The Pacific Regional Culture Strategy (2010-2020)*

generational transmission and, despite the significant challenge facing the sub-region in terms of the impact of climate change, the recognition of the role of culture for sustainable development has – until recently – remained limited.

## THE IMPETUS OF DYNAMIC REGIONAL CULTURE POLICIES

Even though culture and cultural practices are so infused into many aspects of daily life, in much of the Pacific, the culture sector struggles to be considered as a formal sector to be governed. Only about 40% of Pacific island states, excluding Australia and New Zealand, have cultural policies in place (Pacific Community (SPC), 2019). However, most are currently developing such policies—either as stand-alone legislation or integrated within other sectoral policies. These recent efforts have been steered at the regional level. The Pacific has a long tradition of regional cooperation, dating back to the 1970s when the Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture was first established. This sub-regional approach aims to address the lack of national policies, as many of the Pacific island countries facing similar development challenges have found that the sub-regional dynamic supports their national efforts.

**40% of UNESCO Member States in the Pacific have cultural policies that are now in operation.**

Based on the long-standing conviction that the countries of the sub-region should join forces to address the challenges ahead – including those related to peace, security and economic development – in 2004, its leaders adopted a joint development plan: The Pacific Plan for Strengthening Regional Cooperation and Integration. Culture was included under the sustainable development pillar, which established the basis for both sub-regional and national efforts with regards to culture and development. The first major culture-specific sub-regional effort resulting from the inclusion of culture in the 2004 Pacific Plan was the elaboration of the regional strategy: Investing in Pacific Cultures 2010-2020. It continues to play a central role in terms of cultural policies in the Pacific. The strategy has four priority areas: the strengthening of institutional mechanisms, the mainstreaming of culture across sectors, cultural production and communication, and resource mobilization. These priorities – and especially the second one – indicate how culture in the Pacific is now firmly positioned as being inherently linked to other development sectors. Australia and New Zealand play a strong role in shaping, influencing, and supporting the strategies adopted in the Pacific sub-region. Such efforts are implemented

largely through their development aid and technical assistance. While culture is not a specific element in their development aid policies, both countries base their support on the sub-regional strategies developed by the Pacific island states to determine priorities and actions. As such, culture's inclusion in these sub-regional efforts is a signal that aid for culture may become a more prominent priority.



***We [the Pacific leaders] treasure the diversity and heritage of the Pacific and seek an inclusive future in which cultures, traditions and religious beliefs are valued, honoured and developed the Framework for Pacific Regionalism (2014)***



## THE RIPPLE EFFECT ON NATIONAL POLICIES

The great progress made on devising joint plans and strategies at the sub-regional level has also opened pathways for advancing countries' specific culture priorities. In much of the sub-region, cultural institutions are relatively young compared to other sectors, and capacities have historically been limited. However, a review of the first five years of implementation of the regional strategy showed that most countries had enhanced institutional capacities through significant increases in staff and budgets. For example, in Fiji, the Department of Heritage and Arts increased its budget by 55% over a period of 8 years (2008-2016) and the number of staff increased from 3 to 22 during the same period (Pacific Community (SPC), 2019). Its first cultural policy is under development.

Since the adoption of the sub-regional strategy, legal frameworks have also been strengthened, including in Samoa and Solomon Islands. In Tonga, for example, culture used to be part of the Ministry of Education and was not fully considered as a sector in its own right. Since 2010, however, the country has developed a national culture policy, increased central government staffing for culture from 2 to 8 people and established cultural coordination committees on each of the islands, tasked with the creation of inventories of tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Tonga now aims to revitalize its national museum, as well as aspiring to have its first World Heritage property nominated by 2020.

Civil society organizations (CSOs) in the culture field across the region have also increased capacities thanks to the more enabling environment offered by these new policy frameworks. CSOs are now to play an increasingly important role in policy formulation, analysis and implementation. In addition, they contribute to service delivery within the culture sector, filling part of the capacity gap at the level of public institutions. Since many of these CSOs work across sustainable development sectors such as health, gender, or the environment, this helps integrate the culture sector within other fields. The private sector also plays a role. In Samoa for example, the Samoa Small Business Enterprise Centre partnered with the Secretariat of the Pacific Community in 2015 to provide entrepreneurship training to the creative sector, reaching the crafts, visual arts and design sectors.

International conventions are another source of inspiration for national policies and Pacific states are increasingly active in ratifying UNESCO Culture Conventions and inscribing various forms of heritage on UNESCO-administered lists and registers. However, interest in international cultural conventions remains uneven: for example, only Samoa, Australia and New Zealand have ratified the UNESCO Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005). However, with the exception of Australia, New Zealand, and Niue, all Pacific countries have ratified the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. In many countries, culture authorities consider the adherence to international mechanisms such as the UNESCO World Heritage Convention (1972) as a way to advance national support for their sector in terms of funding and capacity-building. Tuvalu and the Federated States of Micronesia considered their recent ratification of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) as an important step to gain more support for their efforts to safeguard their cultural heritage.

Australia and New Zealand have strong cultural policies and programmes that could provide useful guidance to other countries in the Pacific, for example, with regard to specific measures such as the protection of local cultural content, that currently are not so well developed in other Pacific states. At the same time, population growth and migration from the Pacific islands, as well as from other parts of the world, represent particular challenges to Australia and New Zealand, as regards their national needs in cultural policies. Both countries face the challenge of striking a balance between addressing growing diversity and the continuing efforts to support, value and preserve indigenous culture, which have long been overlooked.

However, despite progress in bolstering national capacities and institutional frameworks, the lack of sufficient quantitative and qualitative evidence on the economic and social contributions of culture is hindering the development of dedicated policies at the national level for many Pacific states. This situation is gradually being addressed: the first Regional Cultural Statistics Meeting was held in 2011, with the support of the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, to strengthen capacities in the area of cultural statistics. The Secretariat of the Pacific Community also conducted a comprehensive cultural mapping exercise in Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, and Tuvalu, funded by the European Union. The positive impact of greater investment in cultural data can be seen in Vanuatu, where a national survey on well-being that included culture led to the positioning of the sector at the heart of the country's national sustainable development plan.

**In May 2018, Pacific ministers for culture agreed to advocate for increasing national budgetary allocations to at least 2% of the national budgets by 2030.**

Addressing the data shortfall would also help link the prioritization of culture in public policies to ensuring appropriate resources, which remains a significant challenge. Pacific island states are said to allocate less than 1% of their national budgets for culture. As a result, in 2018, the region's ministers of culture, at the sub-regional level committed to advocating for a rise in national budget allocations for culture to at least 2% by 2030 (Pacific Community (SPC), 2018). Yet, resource mobilization for culture continues to present challenges, often due to the perception that there is little return on investment in culture and the sector remains heavily dependent on project funding from a variety of donors, as public funding remains very low. Furthermore, the portion of donor funding allocated to culture is at the lowest level in over a decade. The funding trend in the sub-region indicates that stronger linkages with climate change, disaster risk resilience, sustainable farming, human rights and gender equality, for example, would enhance the sector's potential for attracting the required resources, from funding pools that are not earmarked for the culture sector.

## CULTURE ANCHORED IN THE 2030 AGENDA

A distinctive feature of the cultural policies in the sub-region is that they are more closely aligned with sustainable development policies than in other regions of the world. This is, again, largely thanks to the strong regional frameworks that have guided multisectoral

development strategies and plans in much of the Pacific over the last two decades. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development was a milestone in the Pacific that opened the way to an even more strategic approach to culture and development, including in countries that do not currently have dedicated cultural policies. For example, the Cook Islands and Fiji have adopted national strategies following the adoption of the SDGs, which include culture as one of the national development goals; and both Niue and Tonga designate culture as an important element in their national development strategies. The importance that is placed on culture in the context of fostering sustainable development is demonstrated by the initiative shown by some Pacific states to advocate for culture in a number of international fora, as well as in strategic documents related to regional cooperation that has helped position the culture sector more strategically within the regional development agenda.

Yet, despite these recent efforts at the policy level, the culture sector continues to work in relative isolation at the operational level. As a result, the very ambitious goal of linking culture to other development sectors has not been fully realized. A more systematic use of cultural impact assessments could contribute to advancing the place of culture in development planning. At a sub-regional level, the Social Development Programme has started to develop tools and guidelines for conducting such assessments, which are to serve as a basis for the development of national tools.

## THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE: CULTURE FOR RESILIENCE

The Pacific sub-region is facing some of the most extreme consequences of climate change, with numerous inhabited islands at risk of disappearing below sea-level, in addition to being prone to numerous disaster risks. The regional Framework for Resilient Development in the Pacific (2017-2030) strategy document, which guides efforts to tackle these challenges in line with SDG 13 (on climate action), recognizes the role of culture for resilience. The focus on integrating the conservation of cultural and natural heritage in the Pacific, including marine heritage, underscores the sub-region's deep connections between people, culture, and the environment. The culture sector now aims to build on this intimate connection to advocate for greater cultural awareness in disaster risk reduction strategies, as well as in building greater awareness at the global, regional and national levels.

**New Zealand's cultural policy seeks to retain, uplift and promote the value of indigenous knowledge and cultural practices for New Zealand, the Pacific and the World. Its embraces the essence of Pasifika peoples and cultures and is also based strongly on Pacific concepts:**

**Tagata** – a focus on people – artists and arts practitioners resourced appropriately to develop their practice and deliver outstanding work.

**Vaka** – arts groups, collectives and organisations supported to help lead and develop Pacific arts in Aotearoa.

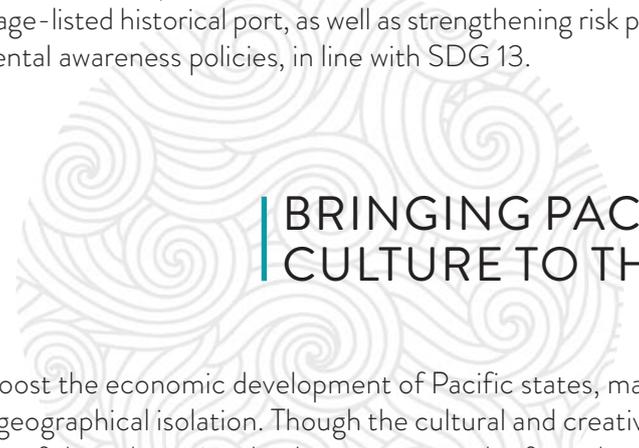
**Va** – an innovative and networked Pacific arts environment, so that Pacific arts are strengthened for future success.

**Moana** – meaningful connections across Aotearoa (New Zealand), Oceania and, globally, ensuring that Pacific peoples and arts are further enriched.

*Pacific Arts Strategy, New Zealand, 2018-2023*

The clearest link between culture and resilience in the Pacific is expressed in the acknowledgement of the role of traditional and indigenous knowledge for sustainable development. A growing number of programmes, initiatives and projects aim to document this wealth of knowledge as part of the evidence and research base needed to ensure the development and adoption of culturally-sensitive policies and practices, thereby embedding culture fully in other development areas. For example, traditional knowledge is increasingly drawn upon to enhance food security in Kiribati in line with SDG 2 (on reducing hunger). Many villages on the Kiribati islands were dependent on food imports, which made food expensive, limited in variety and often unhealthy. In response, the Culture and Museum Division of the Ministry of Internal Affairs partnered with the Ministry of Environment, as well as local communities and practitioners, to assist with reviving the traditional food methods, for example preservation techniques, as well as replanting trees and crops to allow the villages to be more self-reliant. In turn, parts of the produce are also used for local craft production, in line with SDG 12 (on responsible consumption and production). Also, a new policy in New Zealand also emphasizes the importance of local, indigenous knowledge and traditions, guided by a growing recognition of the Maori culture and language.

Moreover, the Pacific sub-region has been leading the way globally through its strategic advocacy for the role of culture in disaster risk reduction planning at the global level in line with SDG 13 (on climate action). In 2012, Samoa was one of the first countries to include culture in the multi-sectoral Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) following Cyclone Evan. This methodology has since been replicated across the sub-region – including in the aftermath of Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu (2015) and Cyclone Winston in Fiji (2016). In the wake of these disasters, culture teams were mobilized to assess damage and losses in the sector, which were then integrated with the findings of other sectors. This approach has set an example worldwide, with an increasing number of PDNA reports including references to the culture sector and UNESCO having scaled up its efforts and capacities to participate in such exercises. Participating in such endeavours, has also helped position the sector within sustainable development programmes in the affected countries. Following Fiji's PDNA assessment, for example, funds were secured for the site of Levuka, a UNESCO World Heritage-listed historical port, as well as strengthening risk preparedness planning and environmental awareness policies, in line with SDG 13.



## BRINGING PACIFIC CULTURE TO THE WORLD

Culture can also help boost the economic development of Pacific states, many of which lag behind due to their geographical isolation. Though the cultural and creative industries are among the priorities of the sub-regional culture strategy, the focus has rarely been on the economic aspects, despite some notable exceptions, for example, Niue's national strategy to engage women and youth in cultural industries as a way to advance the economic empowerment of women and youth in line with SDG 5 (on gender equality) and SDG 10 (on reducing inequalities). Cultural and creative industries, as well as various forms of artistic expression, have long been popular but have catered to a local public and so have remained minor economic growth sectors. Likewise, for the tourism sector,

which is a major source of income in the Pacific, the cultural dimension is often under-appreciated. The impetus for the growth of the economic potential of the culture sector has, once again, come from the sub-regional level. The South-Pacific Tourism Organization (SPTO) Pacific Regional Tourism Strategy 2015-2019 identified culture as one of the main drivers for attracting visitors. As tourism has been classified by the World Bank (World Bank, 2016) as one of the only viable economic sectors for much of the Pacific, the sector is increasingly looking towards culture to expand sustainable development opportunities.

The development of tourism products that rely on local cultural content also offers new and diversified goods for the tourism market in the region, bringing benefits to the local population, as opposed to the cruise and resort based tourism that currently dominates, in

**The Festival of Pacific Arts (FestPac) – the largest gathering of Oceanic cultures – has been held every year since 1972 and was established to stem the erosion of traditional arts and culture in the sub-region. Cooperation at the regional level still drives cultural policy formulation. In Solomon Islands, the 2012 Festival of Pacific Arts and Culture was a milestone that reinvigorated the country, by highlighting the importance of culture and arts in rebuilding national pride and in driving tourism following a prolonged period of social unrest, which negatively impacted the economy. The festival triggered a series of positive policy developments: the following year, Solomon Islands adopted its first national culture policy with a focus on cultural industries and cultural tourism, which has in turn resulted in a significant increase in cultural events being organized throughout the country. Furthermore, this led to an increasing number of arts and cultural associations being established, greater inter-ministerial cooperation and plans for the establishment of a National Arts and Heritage Council.**

line with SDG 8 (on decent work). As well as craft production, contemporary arts have also gained popularity on the tourism market in recent years. Pacific countries are increasing the number of World Heritage sites and protected sites at the local and national levels, which attracts visitors to explore the islands beyond the beaches. Tourism is a core component of the management and sustainability of these sites and consequently an important source of income and livelihoods for local communities, and of revenue for governments.

Still, across the sub-region, cultural industries continue to be held back by a lack of investment or fiscal incentives, outdated legislation and insufficient infrastructure. Further enhancing the role of the private sector and civil society organizations may contribute to addressing some of these shortcomings. More comprehensive integration of culture in the monitoring, evaluation and learning framework of the regional strategy, with a view to better documenting the role of culture for sustainable development, would be one of the ways to better support the culture sector through development aid programmes.

# LOOKING AHEAD

Cultural policies in the Pacific sub-region are already strongly rooted in broader public policy, and linked to other sustainable development fields, compared to in other parts of the world. Spearheaded by sub-regional efforts, national policies and strategies tend to focus on traditional skills and knowledge as vectors for economic growth in the narrow economic markets of the Pacific island states, for example through cultural tourism. The significant progress made in recent years is also a foundation for developing more sustainable and resilient communities in the face of the increasing effects of climate change, which threaten the sub-region. Already, the Pacific is providing a clear example of the role of culture for policies to respond to disasters, particularly in post-disaster needs assessment to ensure greater resilience in society. The challenge now for the Pacific is operationalising strategies by enhancing capacities, data and resources for the culture sector, which remain limited.

# HIGHLIGHTS

- The great diversity of the region, as well as its remarkable natural heritage, form the basis of the overall approach to culture, that associates both the tangible and intangible dimensions of culture and reflects the links between people and their environment.
  - Whilst cultural policies historically emerged in the post-colonial era in the spirit of reappropriating cultural values and nation building, emerging debates on cultural property and national identity are opening pathways for renewed international dialogue.
    - Although crafts remain an important sector for employment and social cohesion, the creative economy has great potential to promote employment and entrepreneurship – particularly for women and youth – and is garnering increasing interest in public policy.
    - The African Union’s Agenda 2063 and the United Nations’ 2030 Agenda provide complementary opportunities for culture to be better integrated into broader public policy, including for tackling challenges of rapid urbanization, adaptation to climate change and growing inequalities.
  - Cultural and arts education and the promotion of the region’s cultural values – particularly responsibility towards future generations – have the potential to serve as a lever for promoting a culture of peace and the emergence of regional development models.



Angola • Benin • Botswana • Burkina Faso • Burundi • Cabo Verde •  
 Cameroon • Central African Republic • Chad • Comoros  
 • Congo • Côte d'Ivoire • Democratic Republic of the Congo •  
 Djibouti • Equatorial Guinea • Eritrea • Eswatini • Ethiopia  
 • Gabon • Gambia • Ghana • Guinea • Guinea-Bissau • Kenya •  
 Lesotho • Liberia • Madagascar • Malawi • Mali • Mauritius •  
 Mozambique • Namibia • Niger • Nigeria • Rwanda  
 • Sao Tome and Principe • Senegal • Seychelles •  
 Sierra Leone • Somalia • South Africa • South Sudan  
 • Togo • Uganda • United Republic of Tanzania  
 • Zambia • Zimbabwe





## DIVERSITY AND VULNERABILITY: RETHINKING CHALLENGES

Africa's rich cultural landscapes have been shaped by the history of settlement and migrations across the continent – notably commercial routes and successive kingdoms – as well as the legacy of the colonial period, which has left a significant economic, social and spatial imprint. The forty-seven countries of Sub-Saharan Africa form a geographic space and linguistic entities which reflect the region's history and are marked by specific cultural features, as well as economic exchanges and population mobility. A great diversity of climate zones – from desert areas to tropical forests – is home to the region's outstanding biodiversity, which also nurtures cultural diversity and local knowledge. 14% of Africa's land and 2.6% of its seas are protected at the international level – including as World Heritage sites and biosphere reserves – highlighting the importance of sustaining these assets for global ecosystems (IPBES, 2018). While Africa contributes far less to global carbon emissions than other regions of the world, it is faced with the increasing impact of climate change and disasters.

Africa's population is expected to rise from 1.288 billion in 2018 to 1.704 billion in 2030 and 2.528 billion in 2050 – a demographic trajectory which places increased pressure on human settlements, environmental protection and natural resources, upon which a large proportion of the population depends (United Nations, 2018). Despite a sustained economic growth rate over the past decade, the region experiences enduring poverty rates – 48% of the population lives in extreme poverty – with food insecurity affecting one in four people (United Nations, 2015). Although it remains the least urbanized region in the world – with an average urban population of 43% – Africa has gone through an urban revolution since the turn of the century, with urban growth among the fastest worldwide. The continent is expected to become 50% urban by 2035 (United Nations, 2018). Growing cities face critical challenges, including a high prevalence of informal settlements, weak infrastructure to support urban development, unemployment and a lack of access to basic services. The region is marked by social, educational and cultural inequalities, spurred notably by the urban-rural divide, as well as spatial and social segregation patterns, some of which have been inherited from the colonial period. Enduring inequalities, combined with fragile governance structures and competition for natural resources, have left many parts of the region prone to conflicts.



***In Cameroon, women have a lot of responsibilities, for example, taking care of the family and sometimes, even helping to provide for the household. And yet, they don't have the right to express themselves freely because it's frowned upon, culturally. So, we understand that by giving women access to express themselves artistically, what we are doing is trying to use culture to change the culture.***

***Ms Ade Adeline Mofogne Nde, President of the AFHAC – Cameroon Association of Active Women with Disabilities***

Agriculture remains the main source of livelihoods for two-thirds of the population and the economy still heavily relies on goods and services derived from the natural environment (African Development Bank, 2013). Therefore, sustainable management of environmental resources, and stronger urban-rural linkages are essential to drive more inclusive development

pathways, foster economic diversification and help achieve other human development objectives reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Addressing the needs of youth – in a region where over 60% of the population is below age 30 and faces high unemployment – and furthering gender equality will be particularly critical (United Nations, 2015). In that context, the cultural and natural diversity that the region is endowed with represents a key asset to inspire more people-centered, place-based development strategies. This perspective provides a fresh outlook on the role of cultural policies in the region.



## FROM SUPPORTING LIBERATION TO PROMOTING DIVERSITY: TRAJECTORIES OF CULTURAL POLICIES

Cultural policies in Africa stem from the region's colonial history and the needs of newly independent countries to develop a national identity that was grounded in the appreciation of a local culture, which had been denied under the colonial period. Finding a way to build national identities and to fully value cultural practices, within a complex heritage, has been challenging for many countries. As a result, the focus of early cultural policies was strongly rooted in cultural and historical references pre-dating the colonial period, including intangible cultural heritage. Monumental heritage – that is often associated with the colonial past – and contemporary creation received less attention in the first decades after independence. Addressing these particular challenges lies at the heart of the region's cultural policies and their linkages with other development fields.

Despite the important symbolic role of the culture sector following independence, most countries of the region have not fully embraced the potential of cultural policies and legislation. Combined with the sector featuring low on policy priorities, this has resulted in a rather standardized approach to cultural policies that do not fully address the needs nor the potential of the culture sector. Around 40% of countries do not have a formal cultural policy today; where policies are in place, there is often a gap between policy and its implementation, deriving not only from a lack of resources but also from complex political, social and economic problems (UNESCO, OCPA, 2019).

Policies and programmes at the national level have been gradually improving, supported notably by the structuring of the culture sector, as well as by regional and international cooperation efforts. Cultural policies can broadly be grouped into two types, which exist side by side in Africa today. 'First-generation' cultural policies tend to approach the culture sector in isolation, without linking it to other sectors. Such policies are often standardized, lack a strong conceptual framework, as well as implementation strategies and instruments. In contrast, 'second-generation' cultural policies put greater emphasis on cultural diversity and rely on a wider approach to culture encompassing intangible cultural heritage and the creative economy. These policies link culture more closely with national development plans. Cultural policies vary in scope across the sub-regions, with a more explicit emphasis on the liberation movement in Eastern and Southern Africa, and a stronger focus on the governance of the culture sector and socio-economic development in West and Central Africa.



## PUTTING CULTURE AT THE HEART OF AFRICA'S RENAISSANCE

The progress of national cultural policies has been strongly encouraged by regional dynamics. Early, post-independence cultural policy efforts often took place at the Pan-African level, through regional events – such as AFRICACULT (1975) and the Festival of Arts and Culture in Lagos (1977) – or through regional, culture-oriented policy documents – for example the Pan African Cultural Manifesto (1969), the Cultural Charter for Africa (1976) or, more recently, the Charter for African Cultural Renaissance (2006). Resulting from these earlier efforts, culture has been a significant area of focus in regional development schemes, notably in the African Union's Agenda 2063, adopted in 2013, which has become the main platform for advancing culture's role in African development policies.

Progress at the national level is also aided by a growing number of regional organizations that are active in the culture field. Among them are the Observatory of Cultural Policies in Africa, a non-governmental Pan-African organization that supports African countries in defining, implementing and monitoring cultural policies. An increasing number of professional cultural associations are also active across the region, including Arterial Network and the African Network of Cultural Policies, which focus notably on the development of the creative sector, the protection of civil society and freedom of expression. More specialized regional entities are also providing technical assistance to cultural institutions and professionals, supporting capacity-building and facilitating the dissemination of cultural concepts and instruments, among which are the African Heritage School in Porto-Novo, Benin and the International Council of African Museums in Nairobi, Kenya.

International conventions in the culture field have also guided policy development in the region, serving as an inspiration for the development of national policies and legislation. Yet, despite the almost universal ratification of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention (1972) across the region, Africa remains underrepresented on the World Heritage List, particularly for cultural heritage, although there has been an increased interest in heritage preservation in the region. The 96 African sites inscribed represents only 8.6% of World Heritage properties. The ratification level is also high for the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) – 42 State Parties from Africa, and the UNESCO Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) – 38 Parties, both of which have received significant interest in the region. Meanwhile, the UNESCO Convention for the Prevention of Illicit Trafficking of Cultural Property (1970) is gradually garnering greater interest – 30 State Parties.

**Among its seven 'aspirations' or overarching goals, Agenda 2063 envisages 'an Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics', building on 'Pan-Africanism and the common history, destiny, identity, heritage, respect for religious diversity and consciousness of African peoples and her diaspora'. It states that 'Africa cultural renaissance is pre-eminent' and recommends 'inculcating the spirit of Pan Africanism; tapping Africa's rich heritage and culture to ensure that the creative arts are major contributors to Africa's growth and transformation; and restoring and preserving Africa's cultural heritage, including its languages.**

Likewise, international cooperation has also represented a strong lever for cultural policies, especially in view of the limited public financing for culture. In light of its multifaceted development challenges, the region is a priority beneficiary of most Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding worldwide, notably through bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Although culture is rarely prioritized in ODA, it is frequently a component of efforts in other policy areas such as urban development, education and social inclusion. African Member States are also the main beneficiaries of financial and technical assistance mechanisms provided by UNESCO under the UNESCO Culture Conventions and programmes, including preparatory assistance for the inscription of elements on UNESCO-administered registers and lists, as well as capacity-building. For example, the region has received approximately 58% of international assistance from the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Fund since 2008, notably targeted at safeguarding activities, including the community-based inventorying of intangible cultural heritage practices.



## RENEWED DIALOGUE THROUGH CREATIVITY AND HERITAGE

The creative economy is an emerging and promising sector in the region and is increasingly addressed by public policies. In 2017, the cultural and creative industries were estimated to represent US\$ 49 billion in revenue and 2 million jobs in Africa and the Middle East. Although its share of GDP remains modest, the creative sector is growing rapidly, offering significant potential for promoting social cohesion, freedom of expression, and job creation, particularly female employment and entrepreneurship. The film, music and audiovisual sectors account for the greatest number of jobs within the creative sector, respectively representing 490,000, 425,000 and 353,000 jobs each. In some countries, such as Burkina Faso, Madagascar or Mali, crafts represent a significant share of jobs, including in the informal sector. The digital revolution has also opened up new opportunities for artists, creators and cultural entrepreneurs. Cities such as Dakar, Senegal, a Creative City of Media Arts, increasingly emphasize the potential of digital technologies for sustainable development (AFD, EY, 2018).

Cultural policies are now starting to address the creative sector in a more comprehensive way, by developing dedicated strategies for the development of cultural and creative industries – such as in Tanzania, Niger and Burkina Faso – or by targeting specific sectors such as cinema in Nigeria or visual arts in South Africa. This growing interest has stimulated sub-regional and regional policy developments, as reflected by the Regional Law on Cultural and Creative Industries, which was endorsed in 2016 by the East African Community. However, beyond these success stories, in most countries the sector is faced with a low production and distribution capacity, and insufficient legal frameworks for intellectual

**In Burkina Faso, nearly 2.8% of the working population (170,000 people) is registered to work in the cultural and creative sector, including crafts, and their revenues contribute to more than 3% of GDP, whilst in Nigeria, close to 300,000 people are employed in the film industry, which accounts for 2% of GDP. (UNESCO, 2014)**

property protection. Despite a growing appetite for local cultural content – mainly due to a growing urban middle class – the market also remains strongly influenced by globalized consumption practices and imported products. Overall, gender equality and the participation of women, along with the challenges of the digital environment and artificial intelligence, are two issues gaining traction within the policy debate in the region. The need to ensure more inclusive participation of women artists, creators and producers is being discussed in several fora, including the 2019 edition of the Pan-African Festival of Cinema and Television of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso (FESPACO) in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso.

**The Regional Law on Cultural and Creative Industries was endorsed in 2016 by the East African Community to support the expansion of the creative sector within the sub-region. The formulation of the policy was actively supported by Kenya. Serving as a legally binding legal and institutional framework, the law is expected to facilitate the circulation of cultural goods and services and the mobility of artists, also supporting the networking of cultural stakeholders as well as capacity-building efforts.**  
*UNESCO, OCPA (2019)*

The growing participation of partners beyond central government in the implementation of cultural policies is another important trend. As the decentralization process has progressed across the continent over the last few decades, local authorities have been more involved in the safeguarding of cultural heritage or supporting the creative sector. Likewise, civil society organizations are increasingly active in the culture field, supported by the emergence of a new generation of creative entrepreneurs, thus providing a stage for community participation and renewing relations between governments and citizens. This enhanced importance of local stakeholders is conducive to more inclusive cultural policies, as well as stronger linkages with other policy areas.

Among emerging policy discussions in the region, the debate on the restitution of African heritage has gained unprecedented momentum, stimulated by interest largely from the academic and professional world in Africa, Europe and North America – where many items of cultural property are housed. This discussion is likely to expand in the coming years, building on the example of some countries, such as Benin and Zambia, which have launched official requests for the restitution of national artefacts. Whilst there are complex issues related to conservation to be resolved, this debate also centres on making cultural heritage accessible to the population and fostering its potential contribution to inclusion and education. More broadly, such discussions could form the foundation of strengthened partnerships, including the upgrading of institutions, cultural education or intercultural dialogue, thus nurturing cultural diplomacy between the different regions.

## CULTURE AND THE 2030 AGENDA: NEW PATHWAYS

The 2030 Agenda, together with Agenda 2063, provides openings for more robust integration of culture in sustainable development discussions and policies. For the time being, much of the sector's potential for sustainable development has remained unrealized and the culture sector continues to be relatively isolated from other policy areas. In addition, access to data on culture – notably to characterize culture's contribution to other development objectives – is particularly challenging across the region and has represented a major obstacle for further policy integration. Several countries, such as Burkina Faso, Eswatini, Ghana, Mali and Namibia, have been

committed in developing culture indicators and measurement systems, notably as part of UNESCO Culture for Development Indicators, and a number of countries have expressed interest in taking forward the recently developed UNESCO Culture|2030 Thematic Indicators.

Nevertheless, there have been some positive advances. Mali opened the way in the region by playing a key role in shaping culture's place within the 2030 Agenda in particular through hosting national dialogues on culture and development. Since 2015, a number of countries – such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Congo, Gambia, Niger, Namibia, Malawi, and Rwanda – have included culture in their national socio-economic development plans or poverty reduction strategies, and some countries have included culture policies and programmes in their voluntary national reviews on the 2030 Agenda. Meanwhile, cultural policies adopted in the last three years, notably in Burkina Faso and Mozambique, demonstrate a clear integration of the Goals of the 2030 Agenda and those of the Agenda 2063.

Leveraging culture to further education goals (SDG 4) across the region is an essential endeavour, which remains underexplored. Very few educational or cultural policies prioritize cultural and arts education despite the youth bulge across the continent and the particular challenge of youth unemployment (SDG 8). Arts education that empowers young people to value local culture and heritage lays the groundwork for the expansion of the creative sector and counter balances the strong influence of globalized cultural products. Likewise, greater emphasis on the transmission of intangible heritage would not only enhance respect for intangible values and skills but also act as a vehicle for education, notably through indigenous languages, thus helping to reconnect communities and formal education systems. Greater investment in cultural education could also enhance the recognition of cultural diversity, contributing to peace-building efforts as well as reinforcing regional integration.

**In Ethiopia, where the number of visitors doubled between 2010 and 2017 – reaching 933,000 – tourism is having an impact on the economy. (WTO, 2017)**

Conflict mitigation and peace-building (SDG16) is another area where culture could make a difference in a region, which remains particularly affected by crises and unrest. Conflicts are directly impacting the culture sector; 30% of all the sites on the List of World Heritage in Danger are located in Africa, mostly due to the combined challenges of conflict, rapid social transformations, urban growth and unsustainable environmental management. Insufficient border controls and a lack of legislation have also left many places prone to the illicit trafficking of moveable heritage. For African countries experiencing conflict or having recently emerged from violent crises, culture helps rebuild the social fabric, and nurture trust and dialogue. Intangible cultural heritage in the region thus provides a widely untapped wealth of conflict resolution and social mediation practices. Recently adopted cultural policies in the region increasingly emphasize the promotion of culture for peace and social cohesion. For example, countries like Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Rwanda, and Somalia have used culture and memorialization to address the aftermath of war and violence. The Biennale of Luanda: Pan-African Forum for the Culture of Peace, hosted in 2019 in Angola, illustrates growing regional discussions on peace-building efforts in line with SDG 16, addressing issues such as culture-related violence prevention and conflict resolution, the integration of refugees, returnees, displaced persons and migrants, as well as the role of Africa diasporas in furthering cultural exchange.

In a context where Africa is more vulnerable to the impact of climate change and disasters than other regions, integrating climate change and disaster management across the policy realm will be essential to build culture into sustainable pathways. However, cultural policies related to disaster risk management or climate change mitigation and adaptation remain rare. The protection of natural and cultural heritage world help build resilience, as would harnessing tradition heritage systems. In that perspective, the UNESCO African World Heritage Fund has increased its efforts over the past few years to support national partners in developing plans and strategies for enhancing risk management and resilience of World Heritage properties in the region in line with SDG 13 (on climate action).

The development of cultural tourism offers another pathway to further linkages between culture, local economic development and sustainable development. Although tourism in Africa remains dominated by natural heritage, cultural tourism is a growing market. Its growth is driven by cultural heritage, notably World Heritage sites, but also its crafts sector and its increasingly popular national or regional cultural events. Among them are the Biennale of Contemporary Art in Dakar, Senegal, the Bamako Encounters Photography Biennial, Mali, the Pan-African Festival of Cinema and Television of Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, the Durban International Film Festival, South Africa, or the Pan-African Music Festival in Brazzaville, Congo. Further harnessing this potential in cultural policies will be an important endeavour. However, the growth of the tourism sector is hindered by a lack of infrastructure, as well as political instability, in many parts of Africa.

**As part of its cultural development initiatives, the government of Côte d'Ivoire has developed the National Festival of Arts and Culture in Schools (FENACMIS) to contribute to the promotion of the arts, culture, social cohesion and job creation. Today, this festival has become a tool for promoting peace in the context of national reconciliation.**

*UNESCO, OCPA (2019)*

Culture-based approaches to development will also be vital in addressing the challenge of sustainable urbanization in line with SDG 11 (on sustainable cities and communities), which is critical in the region. In a context where cultural heritage in African cities is faced with increasing pressure – resulting in its degradation or destruction – integrating culture into urban strategies is essential to safeguard not only built cultural heritage but also the intangible practices and values recognized by the communities. As cities in the region are marked by recently urbanized populations and strong inequalities, culture can also help build a sense of belonging and foster cultural exchange. As the creative sector is people-centred, the expansion of cultural and creative industries across the region is also likely to contribute to urban regeneration. Increased efforts to integrate the creative sector with urban policies are needed, to foster employment, enhance local identity and promote social inclusion, especially for youth. The recent growth of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network across the region – which now counts 9 African cities, notably focused on crafts and music, but also literature and media arts – testifies to this increased interest.

# LOOKING AHEAD

The cultural diversity of Africa, reflecting its history of settlements and migrations, together with its outstanding natural and cultural heritage, lay the foundation for a specific, comprehensive approach to culture, combining tangible and intangible components and stressing the deep relationship between people and their environment. Cultural policies – which have historically been anchored in nation building efforts following the colonial era and supported by pan-Africanism – are gradually incorporating this systemic approach to culture and strengthening their position within national policy agendas. In view of the development challenges faced by the region – including its particular vulnerability to the impact of climate change, the scope of urban growth, social inequalities and youth unemployment, as well as the magnitude of conflicts – cultural policies can make a strategic contribution through strengthening linkages with other policy areas. Reflecting this growing awareness and policy shift – which is greatly supported by regional efforts, notably the Agenda 2063 – an increasing number of national development plans now include culture as a major lever for change.

# HIGHLIGHTS

- Culture was placed at the heart of public policy for the newly independent countries as a tool for nation building, harnessing the region's rich cultural heritage and traditions in literature, calligraphy, arts, music and knowledge.
  - Recent socio-political changes in the region are gradually opening pathways to greater cooperation with civil society and creating more space for artists to develop cultural expressions, particularly through cinema.
    - Regional organizations provide a platform for better positioning emerging trends in Arab culture at the international level.
    - Whilst currently public policies rarely make links between culture and sustainable development, the regional tradition of harnessing culture to shape the 'citizens of tomorrow' – including through the innovative debates generated through World Arabic Language Day – could contribute to fostering intercultural dialogue.
  - Intangible cultural heritage has opened up new opportunities for interregional cooperation through multinational inscriptions and traditional knowledge could also be harnessed for adapting to tackle climate change.



Algeria • Bahrain • Egypt • Iraq • Jordan • Kuwait  
• Lebanon • Libya • Mauritania • Morocco • Oman  
• Palestine • Qatar • Saudi Arabia •  
Sudan • Syrian Arab Republic • Tunisia •  
United Arab Emirates • Yemen





## ARAB CULTURE BRIDGING HISTORICAL RURAL-URBAN DIVIDES

The geography and climate of the Arab States region – composed of fertile coasts, large desert and semi-arid zones – have made it a place of great diversity, commonly structured around four relatively homogeneous sub-regions: the Maghreb, the Nile Valley, the Fertile Crescent and the Arabian Peninsula. Stretching over a large geographic area, the region is culturally unified through the Arabic language and the dominance of Islam, which have both strongly influenced its cultural traditions.

The region's ancient urban centres have long been at the heart of artistic, literary and architectural traditions, whereas the rural, desert areas were historically home notably to nomadic people and their traditional forms of cultural expressions. Since the 1950s, rapid urbanization of the coastal lands has further reinforced the historic divide between the coast and inland areas, resulting in significant inequalities. The Arab States region has – due to its location – often been at the centre of major historic developments, successive empires and important trade routes. The resulting layers of history, reflecting Arab and Ottoman conquests, as well as Western presence through colonies and protectorates, up until its present-day status as a centre of globalized trade have shaped the culture of the region. Arabic knowledge, culture and language have also had an influence extending well beyond the region, including in the areas of science, poetry, literature and calligraphy.

With a large youth population who, thanks to growing access to information technologies and media, are increasingly able to express their aspirations, the region is changing fast and the culture sector is adapting with it. The 'Arab spring' that started in 2011 marked certain parts of the region with significant political change, conflict and instability. These tendencies are further exacerbated by inequalities, rising poverty, and high numbers of refugees and internally displaced populations. The various conflicts across the region have, in recent years, also significantly impacted culture in all its forms.



## CULTURE EMBEDDED IN PUBLIC POLICY

Culture has long been recognised in the region as an important component of public policy. Immediately following independence, policies in the Arab States focused on the role of culture for creating identity and building unity. These were rarely stand-alone cultural policies but were rather integrated into broader national policies. Both at the national and the regional levels, such policies prioritised the conservation of cultural heritage, mainly monumental and moveable heritage, as well as the promotion of literature and traditional arts. One of the most visible ways in which this manifested was the numerous state-sponsored festivals, many of which had international reach. This initial policy focus reflects the historic rural-urban division in Arab cultural policies, which have tended to prioritize cities, notably capital cities.

Today, cultural policies in the region are covered by a vast body of legal texts. At the highest level, culture is represented in the constitutions of all countries in the region, emphasizing its importance for nation building. Regional organizations play a role in fostering cooperation, through ALECSO (Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization) and ISESCO (Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), established in 1970 and 1973 respectively. These organizations facilitate debate and advocate policy direction, for example, the recent emphasis on the concept of cultural rights, including freedom of religion, freedom of expression, press freedom and gender equality. This is also exemplified by the introduction of the Arab Literacy Decade (2015-2024) and the Arab Decade of Cultural Rights (2018-2024), decreed by Ministers of Culture through ALECSO. In the absence of formal regional cultural policies, UNESCO Culture Conventions – in particular the UNESCO World Heritage Convention (1972), the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) and the UNESCO Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (2005) – serve as a framework, ensuring a certain common approach to national policies and laws across the region.

The role of the State in cultural policy-making and implementation is particularly strong in the Arab States region. Through a centralized model, public involvement in the culture sector sometimes also extends through a network of public-funded cultural institutions across the country, such as in Tunisia. Central governments strongly support national cultural institutions – sometimes even directly running them – including, for example, the Cairo Opera House and Museum (Egypt), the Algiers Opera House (Algeria), the Bardo Museum in Tunis (Tunisia), the Baghdad Museum (Iraq) and the Qatar National Museum in Doha (Qatar). Indeed, museums are particularly well developed in the region, for example in Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In the case of the latter, this is partly thanks to UNESCO's support in building the National Museum of Egyptian Civilizations, further advancing the work of the safeguarding campaigns that began in the 1960s, such as the UNESCO-pioneered safeguarding campaigns to save the temples at Abu Simbel.

As a result, however, there is often a rather standardized approach to the sector, in which the public sector tends to work in relative isolation. Traditionally, ministries of culture and other public institutions or departments have focused on certain areas such as the management of archaeological, historical and traditional material heritage, with national laws mirroring this very specific scope. Copyright is one of the few other areas included in national law in a large majority of states. In a number of countries across the region, culture governance tends to be shared between a ministry responsible for antiquities – historically focused on archaeology and built heritage – and a ministry of culture that manages other aspects of culture. This distribution of responsibility reflects the early focus of cultural policies in the region.

**'...believing that the cultural and intellectual unity is the main basis upon which Arab Unity is built; and that the safeguarding of Arab heritage, its transmission to the succeeding generational and its constant renewal, is the guarantee for the solidarity of the Arab national and its ability to pursue a leading role in the field of human civilization and universal peace based on the principles of justice, liberty and equality...'**

*Charter of Arab Cultural Unity (1964)*



## GRADUAL DIVERSIFICATION OF CULTURAL POLICIES

In more recent years, however, the approach to cultural policies has expanded, even if a centralised, state-centric model continues to dominate. The region gradually began to open up as of the 1970s to cultures beyond the national boundaries, both inter-Arabian and international, which led to the exposure of different artistic and literary expressions, for example through international festivals. Also, starting in the 1980s, new influences from Western and Egyptian culture, began to have a strong influence through cultural products like film, music and television shows. A small number of countries have recently adopted legislation on the status of the arts and social protections for workers in the cultural sector, including in Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia.

At present, it is difficult to give a clear picture of the culture sector in the region, as precise data are not always available. At the level of the State, this is partly due to the dispersal of cultural policy-making data (included related to the budget) across different departments, including related to tourism, youth, gender equality and heritage. Furthermore, many cultural activities are still part of the informal economy. Another obstacle is that the involvement of the private sector in cultural and creative industries has not yet been fully documented through analysis that can reflect its true impact.

Nevertheless, a number of key trends can be seen in the region. The first example is the increase in interest in intangible cultural heritage, which started in the 1990s with the UNESCO Living Human Treasures Programme. An appreciation of cultural heritage has always been strong in the region, as indicated by the near universal ratification of the UNESCO World Heritage Convention (1972) and some of the earliest World Heritage inscriptions were in the region. Yet, the intangible cultural heritage approach offered new opportunities to present a uniquely Arab perspective, which resonated with the overarching policy objectives of promoting national and regional identities. With near universal ratification of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), recent years have seen a growing number of inscriptions of intangible cultural heritage from the Arab States region on the UNESCO lists. In addition, this emphasis on intangible cultural heritage safeguarding broadened the scope of cultural policies to include issues such as transmission and local capacity-building. This approach has the potential to foster greater social inclusion in society, particularly to redress inequalities between rural and urban populations, even if implementation of the UNESCO 2003 Convention remains imbalanced across the region.

**The right to culture is guaranteed. The freedom of creative expression is guaranteed. The State encourages cultural creativity and supports the strengthening of national culture, its diversity and renewal, in promoting the values of tolerance, rejection of violence, openness to different cultures and dialogue between civilizations. The State shall protect cultural heritage and guarantees it for future generations.**

*Constitution of Tunisia, (2014)*

## A GRADUAL SHIFT IN FOCUS: TOURISM, THE CREATIVE ECONOMY AND INTERNATIONAL INFLUENCE

A second major change in cultural policies is the increasing attention paid to the economic potential of culture, as reflected in the recently adopted policy approaches of some countries. Culture is increasingly viewed as contributing indirectly to the economy through tourism, as demonstrated by projects such as the Louvre Museum in Abu Dhabi (UAE), which is drawing new groups of visitors to the region. The UAE has invested significantly in culture, particularly in the cities of Sharjah and Abu Dhabi. These strategies also reflect the understanding of the role of culture in shaping the contemporary image of cities, even if cultural diplomacy is rarely the stated aim. Furthermore, for over 20 years Sharjah, through the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab culture, has been contributing to the promotion of cultural dialogue and the revitalization of Arab culture. In 2020, it will be the first country in the Arab world to host the World Expo, offering over 180 participating countries to showcase the best of their innovations and culture under the theme 'Connecting Minds, Creating the Future'. A number of other countries, such as Oman and Saudi Arabia, also invest in crafts industries as sustainable revenue sources, which is sometimes also linked to the national tourism strategy.

The cultural and creative industries have also garnered interest in recent years, although their current contribution to the economy remains limited. To address this situation, several states, such as Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria and Tunisia, have introduced tax legislation as part of their culture laws, which includes the provision of tax incentives for cultural entrepreneurship. Cultural 'clusters' are often created in places where a particular discipline is thriving. Examples include cinema (Egypt), theatre (Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Tunisia), poetry (Iraq, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia), and visual arts (Egypt, Iraq, Morocco, Tunisia). Other positive developments include the increase in support to start-ups in the culture field, for example by providing spaces to such young businesses. The increasing number of bilateral agreements could also potentially boost the economic potential of the sector, for example, by facilitating the mobility of artists, since the region has long invested in high-profile fairs and festivals for music, cinema and theatre. As elsewhere in the world, artist mobility in the Arab States remains complex, in terms of visa and other requirements.

Cinema in the Arab world is enjoying increased popularity, particularly Egyptian, Palestinian and Lebanese films are increasingly appealing to domestic and international audiences and are also increasingly financially viable. A new generation of filmmakers are harnessing the power of cinema to shape a new narrative expressing national identity and culture. These include a growing number of women producers and directors. In 2019, a record number of films from Arab countries were premiered in major international film festivals and collected an unprecedented number of accolades. Crucially, there is also a growing number of film



**Art is important for any culture.**

**Art helps build communities.**

**We should help it grow everywhere.**

*Haifaa Al-Mansour, Saudi Arabian Film Director*

festivals held in the Arab States to showcase films from the region, in Kuwait City (Kuwait), Beirut (Lebanon), Marrakech (Morocco), Muscat (Oman), Doha (Qatar) and Dubai (UAE), in addition to the Cairo International Film Festival (Egypt) that was established in 1976. Further support to filmmakers in terms of funding and distribution channels, would contribute to SDG 8 (Decent work), as well in to reinforce SDG 16 (on intercultural dialogue).

## CULTURE, CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Another significant shift is that civil society, in particular youth and the private sector, are increasingly involved in a more integrated way in cultural policies and programmes in the region in line with SDG 17 (partnerships). In fact, the involvement of civil society organizations (CSOs) in cultural life often dates back to before public policies were governing the sector, as some have been in existence for almost a century. These tend to have widespread networks that cover the entire region and have strong outreach into remote areas and small towns, as is the case with, for example, associations dedicated to the transmission of the Maghreb-Andalusian musical heritage in Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. They play an important role in making arts and culture accessible to a vast rural population, and in introducing people to literary and artistic heritage. Their activities include raising awareness of regional heritage, providing support for amateur arts, as well as organizing local fairs, festivals and cultural events. This, in turn, informs CSOs of the needs and concerns

of the rural population, to which they can give voice through advocacy work with various levels of government.

Newer associations have gradually emerged, extending the action of these 'parent' institutions, particularly in cities. They have been more actively supporting new forms of artistic expression and innovation, raising awareness and advocating for the sector. Through this increasing CSO involvement,

the culture sector is addressing one of its main weaknesses of public cultural programmes that hitherto have been heavily centralized, that is meeting the needs of minority groups, including the unemployed, persons living with disabilities, girls and women and rural populations. Regional organizations and networks, such as the Al-Mawred al-Thaqafy (or 'Culture Resource'), play an important role in fostering a more participatory model in shaping cultural policies in line with SDGs 4 (education), 5 (gender equality), 8 (decent work) and 10 (reducing inequalities).

In terms of the private sector, the film industry in Egypt and, to a lesser extent, in Morocco and Tunisia has become increasingly influential. In addition, recent years have seen a growing interest in performing arts and in creative and traditional crafts industries, aided by the popularity of online platforms like Shoof and Yala that make such products available throughout the region. The private sector often represents a very contemporary facet of



***Culture Resource seeks to fulfill its mission to support artists from the Arab region...to create new work and to travel and tour these works...and [to] support the sustainability of cultural industries in the region, without undermining the value of culture as a public good and a basic human right.***

***Culture Resource (Al-Mawred Al-Thaqafy)***

the culture sector, influenced by a rapidly changing digital and technological environment, a growing youth population and migratory flows from rural areas to cities. The private sector also supports the emergence of multi-disciplinary cultural spaces, often built around theatres, which support the arts.

It is noteworthy that these newly engaged civil society partners are not only involved in implementation but also contribute to policy-making, thus ensuring that the sector is gradually adapting to the needs of a society in continuous transformation. In Tunisia, contributions from non-governmental organizations are regularly requested by the Ministry of Culture. In Egypt, artists' unions succeed in having their voices heard, which ultimately influences policy decisions. In Saudi Arabia, a multi-stakeholder study contributed to the development of the new cultural policy that was announced in March 2019. In Jordan, the development of a new cultural policy takes into account the observations of non-public sectors, artists and cultural actors. This shift to a more multi-stakeholder approach is also affecting the financing of the culture sector, particularly due to the involvement of the private sector. Nevertheless, the sector continues to rely heavily on public funding and sustained efforts are needed to stimulate the diversification of funding, including through policies. Currently, the appropriate frameworks that fully integrate civil society and private sector actors in all aspects of cultural policy continue to fall short. Introducing such frameworks, as well as the appropriate tools and clearly defined roles of different actors, would benefit in the region, leading to a more participatory approach and, therefore, more robust policies and implementation.



## CULTURAL POLICIES IN THE FACE OF DEVELOPMENT CHALLENGES

Explicit links between culture and broader sustainable development strategies remain rare. For example, the Arab States region faces the challenge of rapidly growing urban centres and a burgeoning young population. Many cities in the region have traditional historic cores – often referred to as medinas – that represent the archetype of the Arab city, as a homogeneous, coherent and indivisible whole that should be integrated into contemporary life. However, heritage policies overall remain conservative, favouring research and preservation more than adaptation and economic development. As a result, many of these historic areas have become isolated quarters in the midst of urban growth, while other cities have developed medinas as well-preserved centres of traditional commerce and tourist potential in line with SDG11 (on sustainable cities and communities). However, the situation in the medinas is very disparate across the Arab world, even between cities in the same country, reflecting a certain lack of coherence. Fresh urban policies, guided by SDG 11 on cities could revitalise these historic centres.

**Sudan's Peace Research Institute, inaugurated in 2015, advocates for a culture of peace. Its National Anti-War Campaign includes a programme on arts for peace, as well as media for peace.**

In addition, tensions, and in some cases armed conflicts, in the region have, in recent years, caused significant damage to historic cities like Palmyra and Aleppo (Syrian Arab Republic) and Mosul (Iraq), as well as other cultural sites, disrupting cultural practices and their recovery is a major challenge. Recognising the role of heritage in restoring people's identity is crucial for recovery efforts and is a key component of UNESCO's flagship initiative 'Revive the Spirit of Mosul', that aims to restore cultural heritage sites, and revive cultural and educational institutions. As a response to conflict and the illicit trafficking of cultural property in the region, some countries have worked to enhance the role of culture in tackling violent extremism, thus contributing to more sustainable peace in the region, although this often remains limited to CSO programmes, however, is still underexplored at a policy level. A number of countries in the region have adopted policies for peace-building and citizenship, such as the UAE Vision 2021 National Agenda. Qatar's Culture and Sports Sector Strategy 2018-2022, also seeks to make culture a framework for the preservation of identity, the promotion of citizenship and cultural communication, particularly through the development of cultural heritage. A regional reflection on the future of cultural heritage – including strategies to harness intercultural dialogue to prevent conflict – could serve to reinforce the initiatives of individual countries.

Culture in the region has long been seen as a way to shape young people's minds and to help them become 'citizens of tomorrow'. Jordan, Lebanon and Saudi Arabia prioritise the participation of young people in cultural fields, whilst the Omani 'Yashhatoon' programme aims to form a base of young researchers focused on oral intangible heritage. Every year, World Arabic Language Day (proclaimed by UNESCO in 2012) also celebrates the wealth of Arabic culture, poetry and literature, including through specific events that are aimed at engaging youth in creative and cultural activities. UNESCO is also leading discussions on how to better engage youth in educational projects related to culture and heritage. This highly valued educational role of course was also reflected through the early establishment of networks of cultural institutions throughout the region, including in rural areas. Nevertheless, formal cooperation between the culture and education sectors remains rare. The disconnect at the level of ministries filters down throughout the education system and results in a vast skills gap. For example, there are very few countries that have adequate infrastructure for arts education for children and youth, such as conservatories, academies of music, dance, theatre, visual arts or photography. Furthermore, the role of tertiary education in culture-related disciplines remains underdeveloped and tends to take a rather traditional approach. An approach that responds to growing societal needs may open possibilities for an enhanced alignment between both sectors in the future.

Finally, many countries in the Arab States region are facing some of the most severe consequences of climate change, yet national policies rarely feature reference to the impact of climate change on culture and cultural heritage. There are very few natural sites from the Arab States region inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, whereas the region's strong participation in programmes such as UNESCO Biosphere Reserves attests to the importance of its natural protected sites. Currently, Saudi Arabia is one of the few countries in the region that has recently included natural World Heritage sites within its cultural policy, thereby opening doors for a more integrated conservation and management approach. Also, the increase in the number of natural and mixed sites inscribed on the Tentative List for World Heritage inscription across the region testifies to the growing interest in approaches based on natural heritage protection. The technical support provided by the UNESCO Arab Regional Centre for World Heritage, a UNESCO centre established in 2012, is an important facility helping Member States promote and manage both cultural and natural sites.

# LOOKING AHEAD

The Arab States have a strong tradition of culture being a pillar of nation building, a tradition that could be harnessed and modernised to tackle emerging challenges from urban planning to climate change. The trend towards increasing recognition of the region's rich intangible cultural heritage could also enhance the established practices of valuing the region's built heritage, as well as fostering social inclusion, particularly among rural populations, women and youth. The great potential of the region to expand the creative economy is also receiving growing interest, with some key examples standing out as beacons. Many of the region's civil society organizations have experience and reach that complements these efforts, which could deepen and nuance cultural policies and enhance partnerships. Coupled with input from increasingly influential private sector actors, this participation has the potential to bolster not only the economic potential of the sector but also fundamental freedoms.

<b>ACC</b>	Asian Cultural Council
<b>AFRICACULT</b>	Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies in Africa
<b>AFRICOM</b>	International Council of African Museums
<b>ALBA</b>	Bolivarian Alliance of the Americas
<b>ALECSO</b>	Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization
<b>ASEAN</b>	Association of South-East Asian Nations
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>AVI</b>	Asian Vision Institute
<b>CAN</b>	Andean Community
<b>CARICOM</b>	Caribbean Community
<b>CARIFORUM</b>	Caribbean Forum
<b>CDIS</b>	UNESCO Culture for Development Indicators
<b>CELAC</b>	Ministers of Culture of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
<b>CIS</b>	Commonwealth of Independent States
<b>CLACSO</b>	Latin American Council of Social Sciences
<b>CoMoCoSEE</b>	Council of Ministers of Culture of South-East Europe
<b>CSME</b>	Caribbean Single Market and Economy
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organization
<b>EC</b>	European Commission
<b>ECLAC</b>	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
<b>EI-Pikir</b>	Centre for the Study of Public Opinion and Forecasting
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>GDP</b>	Gross Domestic Product
<b>IPBES</b>	Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services
<b>ISESCO</b>	Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>MERCOSUR</b>	Southern Common Market
<b>OCPA</b>	Observatory of Cultural Policies in Africa
<b>ODA</b>	Official Development Assistance
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>PDNA</b>	Post-Disaster Needs Assessment
<b>SAARC</b>	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SEGIB</b>	Ibero-America General Secretariat
<b>SICA</b>	Central American Integration System
<b>SPC</b>	Pacific Community
<b>SPTO</b>	South-Pacific Tourism Organization
<b>UIS</b>	UNESCO Institute for Statistics
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNASUR</b>	Union of South American Nations
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>UNWTO</b>	World Tourism Organization
<b>VNRs</b>	Voluntary National Reviews
<b>WIPO</b>	World Intellectual Property Organization

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